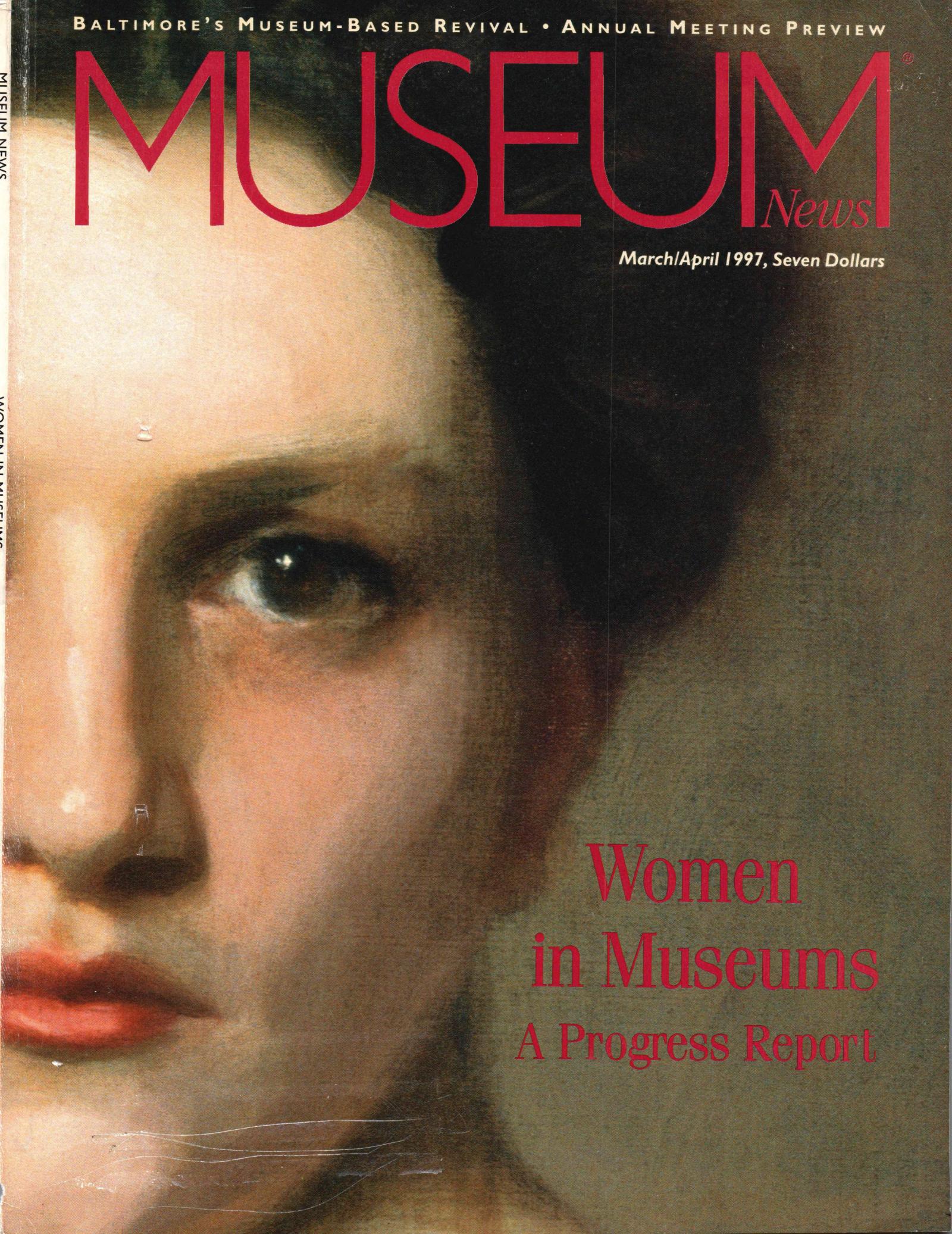


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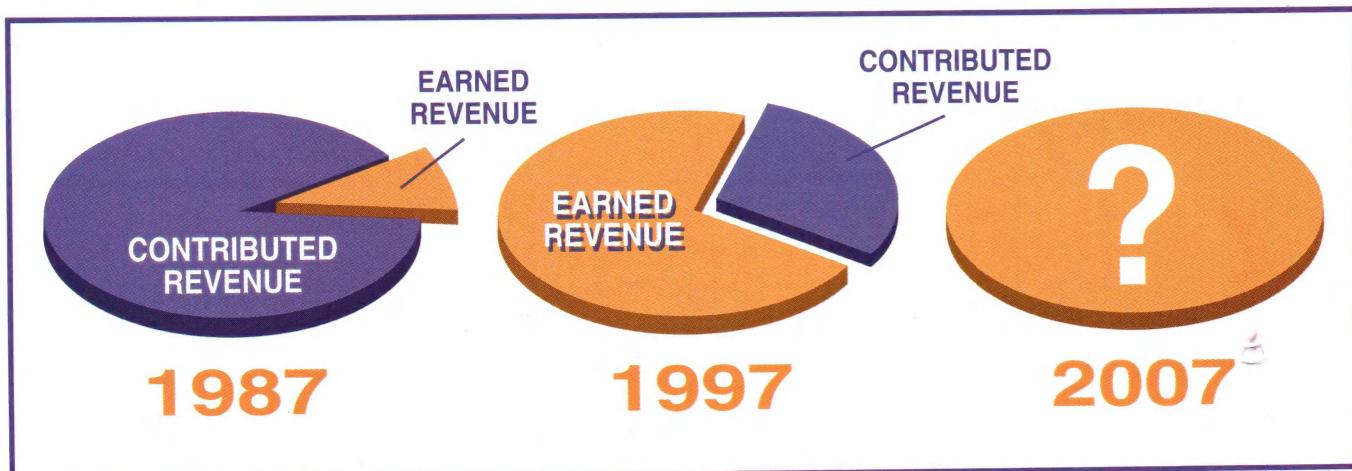
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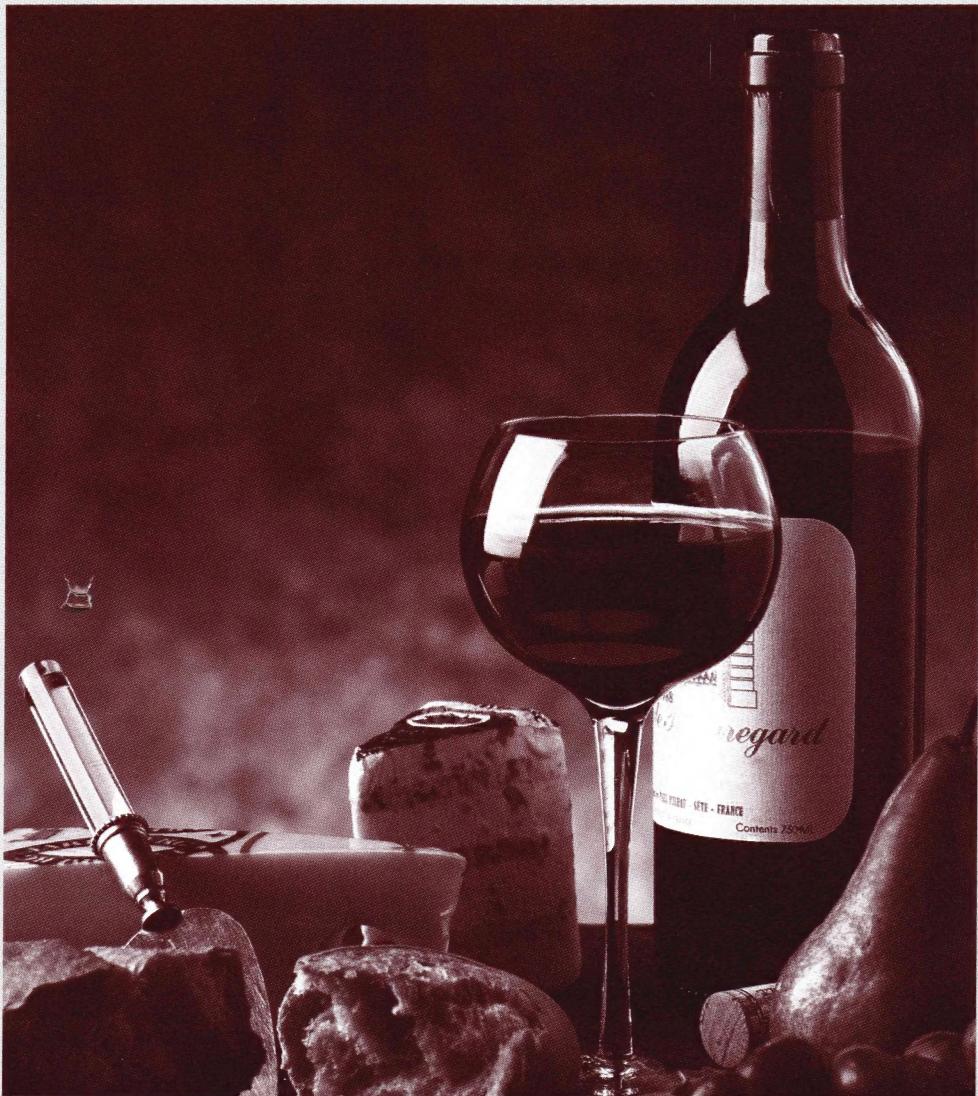
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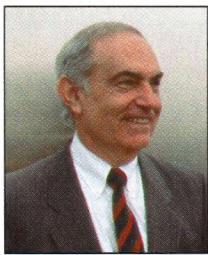
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On the cover (detail) and above: John Singer Sargent, *Elizabeth Winthrop Chanler (Mrs. John Jay Chapman)*, 1893. From the collection of the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Women in Museums

Five women professionals consider past accomplishments  
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Baltimore's museum-based revival  
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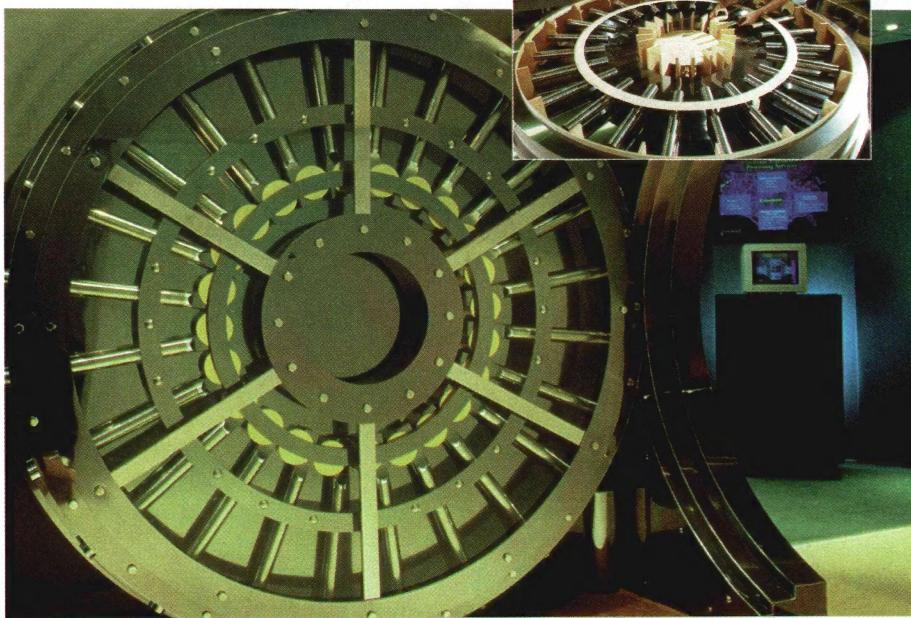
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Museum News (ISSN 0027-4089) is published bimonthly (J/F, M/A, M/J, J/A, S/O, N/D) by the American Association of Museums, 1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 289-1818; FAX (202) 289-6578. Annual subscription rate is \$38. Copies are mailed to all members. Single copy is \$7. Overseas airmail is an additional \$45. Membership in AAM includes \$19 from annual membership dues applicable to a subscription to *Museum News*, except for students and retirees. [This notice is required by the U.S. Postal Service.] POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Museum News*, 1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20005. Copyright 1997, American Association of Museums. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine or its cover may be reproduced without written consent of the copyright proprietor. *Museum News* is indexed in *The Art Index*, published quarterly and available in public libraries. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of AAM. Preferred Periodical postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A. by Pendell Press, Midland, MI.

# Letters

## Museum Studies Hurdles

I read the article by Philip D. Spiess II in the November/December 1996 *Museum News* with considerable interest. However, I do not believe that Spiess directly answered the question posed in the title to his article: "Museum Studies: Are They Doing Their Job?" To answer for him, I would give a definite "yes," but these programs face many hurdles. Many of the hurdles are imposed by academia, but at least an equal, if not a larger, number are imposed by the museum profession.

Looking at the conclusions of the article by Spiess, we can see some of these obstacles, which are created by the museum profession. "First, that the historic split between academic learning and museum training . . . remains a major problem" (p. 40). This is a problem strictly in the minds of museum professionals. Academia solved this problem

generations ago in the education of teachers and members of the medical profession, to give two examples. I suspect that museum professionals wish to keep this an issue because most of them entered the profession from a route other than museum studies.

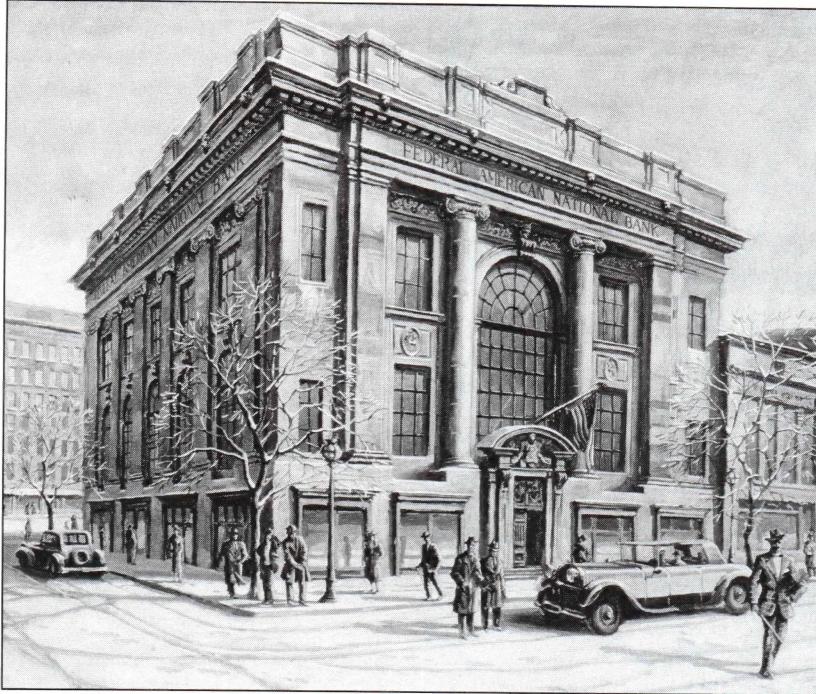
Many in the museum profession are also members of other professions (p. 40), but this seems to me to be one of the strengths of museum studies and it certainly is one of the features that attracts students to museum studies programs. We see students coming into our program who are well-educated, academic high achievers with broad areas of interest. They do not wish to pursue professional careers in academia because of the high pressure to obtain grants and publish research. The museum profession seems to offer the breadth of intellectual challenges that they wish to have.

The fourth and fifth points made by

Spiess seem to reflect the distorted view of museum studies programs voiced by many of the members of the museum profession. Museum studies programs do not set the academic standards for various positions within the museum profession. These are set by museums, the museum profession, and the disciplinary profession. Some positions will require a bachelor's degree, others a terminal master's degree, and still others will require a doctoral degree. Obviously, for those of us who work in programs with terminal master's degrees, our students will compete for the positions for which this degree prepares them. This will represent a wide range of positions from curators to collections managers; educators; exhibits, development, and public relations staff; and directors, to name a few. However, which of these will be available to our students will vary

(Please turn to Letters, page 68)

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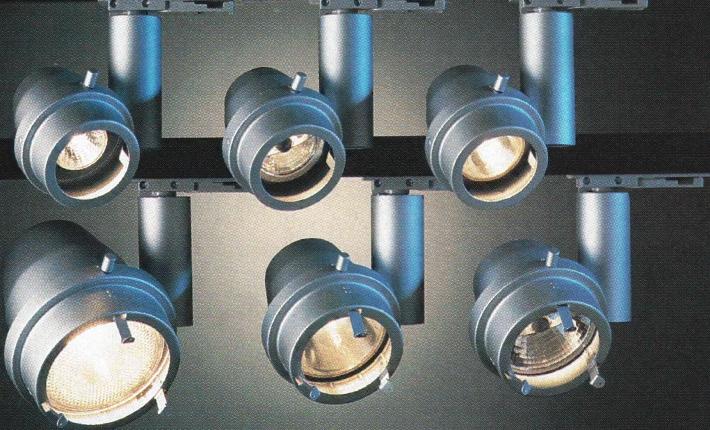
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# M Notes

## **Painting History**

The Octagon, a historic house museum in Washington, D.C., has an intriguing past. Yet, it has never been able to rely upon an abundance of surviving furniture, written accounts, artwork, or personal artifacts to interpret the lives of the family that once lived there.

In the absence of a substantial material collection, last spring the museum began devising an alternative method of depicting its rich history. By collaborating with painter Peter Waddell on an in-house exhibit of 24 contemporary paintings, the Octagon is bringing to life the building's historical importance with an unusual twist. "Facets and Reflections: Painting the Octagon's History" runs from May 23, 1997 through Jan. 4, 1998.

The late 18th-century structure is one of the few surviving homes from a time when Washington, D.C., was dominated by forest and marshland and was struggling to gain prominence as the new nation's capital. The house was completed in 1801 as a winter home for the Tayloes, a wealthy plantation family from Richmond County, Va.

Designed by William Thornton, the original architect of the U.S. Capitol, the Octagon witnessed major events in American history. President James Madison and his wife Dolley sought refuge there during the War of 1812 when British troops set fire to their home. Only five months later, Madison ended the war by signing the Treaty of Ghent in the Tayloes' upstairs parlor.

The Octagon has undergone at least five restorations in the 20th century,



Peter Waddell's painting, *Early Washington*, is on display in the Octagon's dining room. Photo by Robert C. Sautman.

along with several smaller-scale renovations; the most recent work was completed in October 1996. Today, the home operates as a museum under the administration of the American Architectural Foundation and is considered a fine example of Federal period architecture.

As created by Waddell, the paintings depict the Octagon's construction, the important events that took place there, and the activities of the Tayloes. Waddell, a native of New Zealand, estimates the project has taken a year and a half of preparation and research. The exhibit attempts to balance historical fact with his creative and contemporary interpretation.

"This installation of paintings will

help bring the Octagon's history to life for visitors," says Linnea Hamer, curator of exhibitions. By displaying activities of the family in furnished period rooms, Hamer hopes visitors will get a feel for daily life in the house: "Historic house museums use many props to help visitors understand the past, but this is the first use of the skills and interests of a contemporary artist to develop such a site-specific framework for envisioning the distant past."

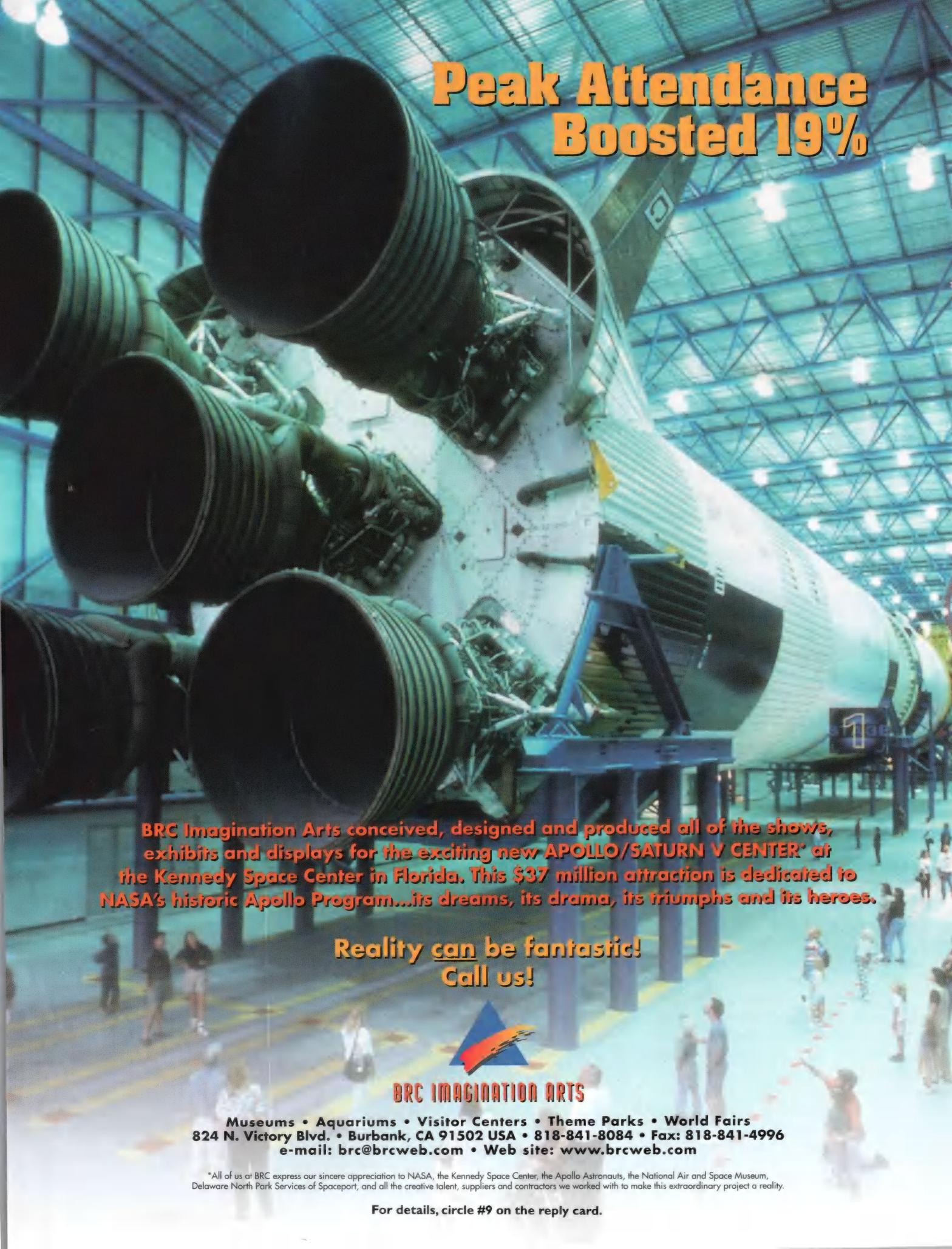
The drawing room at the Octagon will display a variety of Waddell's architectural paintings, including a canvas depicting the unfinished house amidst the flat, swampy grassland of early Washington, and another showing Thornton presenting John Tayloe with a wooden model of the building.

Several of Waddell's works make viewers feel that they are eavesdropping on intimate family gatherings and early 19th-century life. The dining room will feature a painting of a mirror reflecting a party hosted by the Tayloes, and upstairs another work depicts Ann Tayloe taking tea with her children in the parlor.

John Tayloe's personal servant, Archy, will be portrayed waiting patiently outside Tayloe's bed chamber, elegant and poised as he stands in his red and black uniform near vivid green upholstery. In the kitchen and servants' hall downstairs, Waddell's works will depict the lives of other slaves engaged in their daily routines. Six small oval portraits of the Tayloe family members will hang in the entrance hall.

Almost two centuries separate Waddell's paintings from Thornton's conception of the house, but the graceful display of modern with antique blurs vis-

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itors' awareness of the passage of time. Waddell hopes his paintings will help the 20th-century public visualize the building's colorful history and see that, aside from the social conventions of the time, "the doings of the families and the kinds of passions of the people are very similar to our own. The things that I'm dealing with are universal and continuous."

Of great help, Waddell says, was his work with Linnea Hamer, various members of the museum's educational staff, and an independent historian. Together, they spent extensive time studying Octagon artifacts, looking over scant written records, and examining the original wooden model of the house at the Library of Congress. As a result, much of the detail in Waddell's paintings is historically accurate, down to the decoration on Archy's uniform and the type of buggy in which Mr. and Mrs. Tayloe traveled to view their new home.

This constant collaboration and extensive, mutual research conducted by a museum and an artist, Hamer and Waddell agree, can make an exhibition of art and architecture come together successfully and completely. "Working on this project has given the curatorial staff an opportunity to review what is known and also shed some light on areas of the domestic history that hadn't been thought of before," Hamer says. Much of the new information that has surfaced as a result of the research will be incorporated into the Octagon's current records and educational programs.

A self-proclaimed museum and American history fanatic, Waddell believes in the value of truly looking in a museum rather than reading exhibition labels. The amount of text that will accompany his pieces was still under consideration this winter. "I don't think people go to museums to read miles of writing on panels—I certainly never do," he says. "Paintings are physical exhibits and in them are lots of things that are telling a story."

Waddell has designed several interactive programs that will introduce schoolchildren to narrative painting. Lectures, special tours, and workshops designed for adults will also accompany the exhibition. As an additional highlight, visitors will get a chance to see Waddell at work on his canvases in a gallery that will be set up as a 19th-century artist's studio.

The most rewarding aspect of the exhibition for Waddell was the chance to synthesize history: to research it and immerse himself in a period of time, yet depict what he discovered with his own artistic originality. "I have a direct responsibility to history, to do the best job that I can within the nature of history painting," he says. "I'm free to actually show people some things which otherwise they would never, ever see."

—Katurah Mackay

## A Tale of Two States

In an unusual and historic confluence of culture and commerce, voters in two states are transforming a landmark train station into a science center. This past November, citizens of the Kansas City area—those in Missouri and those across the border in Kansas—approved the first ever bi-state metropolitan taxing agreement. As a result, a new retail sales tax will help pay for the construction of Science City at Union Station, scheduled to open in Kansas City, Mo., in 1999.

"A decade-long dream to bring this metropolitan area behind a common purpose has finally come true," said Jack Craft, a Kansas City attorney and co-chair of the bi-state tax force that promoted the project. Craft, who was appointed by Missouri's governor, worked in tandem with the Kansas governor's appointee, newspaper publisher Steve Rose.

Mandated to continue until \$118 million has been raised (estimated to take less than six years), the one-eighth cent tax will cover approximately half of the \$234-million project, supplementing private and public funds. The science center will be owned by the nonprofit Union Station Assistance Corporation and run by the Kansas City Museum.

When Craft talks about a decade-long dream, he is referring to the concept first hatched by a civic organization in Kansas City to capitalize on the geography of the metropolitan region that encompasses counties in both Missouri and Kansas. The line that divides the two states also acts as the metropolitan area's western border; many Kansans work or travel to Kansas City daily.

The group proposed establishing a bi-state cultural district to provide operating revenues for cultural groups

throughout the area. It took political and cultural activists years to get the two state legislatures to schedule a vote on the idea. Once both states (and Congress) approved the measure two years ago, five counties within the earmarked district—three in Missouri and two in Kansas—put it on their local ballots this past Election Day.

Despite their proximity to the metropolitan Kansas City region, many people in the Kansan counties worried that they wouldn't benefit from a cultural district located in Missouri. At that point, says Bill Musgrave, vice president for external affairs at the Kansas City Museum, the concept of a cultural district was replaced by a plan for one signature project that would more clearly benefit everyone. One of the suggestions made to the bi-state task force was a project that already had been in the works for several years—the Kansas City Museum's ambitious plan to build a cutting-edge science center.

According to the museum's president, David Ucko, the project was an obvious choice, particularly when coupled with one of the targeted venues—Kansas City's Union Station. The 750,000-square-foot Beaux Arts structure is the second largest train station in the U.S., after New York's Grand Central Station. Completed in 1914 as part of railway improvements at the time, Union Station was dubbed "the great gateway to the West" by President Woodrow Wilson. By the 1970s, however, only six passenger trains serviced the station daily. In 1972, the structure was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The governors' task force finally settled on Science City at Union Station as the signature project. According to task force co-chair Jack Craft, "as these ideas began to percolate, there was a lot of common overlap between those people wanting to restore Union Station and those who wanted to create the science museum." Science City at Union Station would both establish a new world-class science center in the area (the only metropolitan area without one, according to the museum) and promote the adaptive reuse of a historically valuable but unused structure. However, making it a reality required persuading residents in two states to levy a tax on themselves.

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numbered in the hundreds, the bi-state force waged a media campaign (including a television spot featuring Kansas City native Walter Kronkite), finally convincing 61 percent of the voters that this project was worthwhile. Of the five counties voting on the measure, only Wyandotte County in Kansas rejected it. (According to an editorial in the *Kansas City Star*, residents of this county already pay high taxes.)

Musgrave stresses that the project has far-reaching impact: "This is the classic public/private partnership—we hear about it all the time—and for Kansas City this is the first step towards a global/metropolitan community."

According to Steve Rose, Kansan task force co-chair, the project's two basic angles give it broad interest: "Union Station was a great sell for seniors who felt nostalgic about the historic structure, but it was Science City that put us over the top—this was something that appealed to younger generations because they can use it and take their kids to it."

Another major selling point was the fact that nearly \$90 million was already in place, largely because the Kansas City Museum had been working for a new science center for several years. Proponents are also quick to point out that the bi-state task force carefully devised a budget and plan before the project was promoted to the public, including a \$40-million endowment to ensure that taxpayers wouldn't get saddled with operating costs down the road.

With construction documents being drafted and the tax set to begin in April, Kansans and Missourians alike are anticipating the arrival of Science City. The overall theme for the science center is a "living city" that, according to Ucko, "will draw on the emotions of the visitor." When the museum opens at the end of the century, it will allow visitors to go beneath a city street, step inside a super-sized human body, and operate a weather center.

In a 1993 paper, Ucko wrote, "The encompassing environment of Science City becomes the 'stage set' of a city that

visitors can enter and explore. It represents a special 'living science' city unlike any they have seen. . . ."—Susan Ciccotti

## **In Memoriam: Grace M. Mayer**

Grace M. Mayer, a former curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), died in December at her home in New York. She was 95 years old. Mayer retired in 1993 as curator emeritus of MOMA's Edward Steichen Archive, and spent nearly 30 years at MCNY, where she was founding curator of photographs and prints.

The daughter of a prominent New York investment banker, Mayer began her museum career in 1930, and gained renown during her 63-year career for her pioneering work in the field of photography. At MCNY, she organized the first one-person exhibition of Berenice Abbott's photographs of New York City in 1934, and, with photographer



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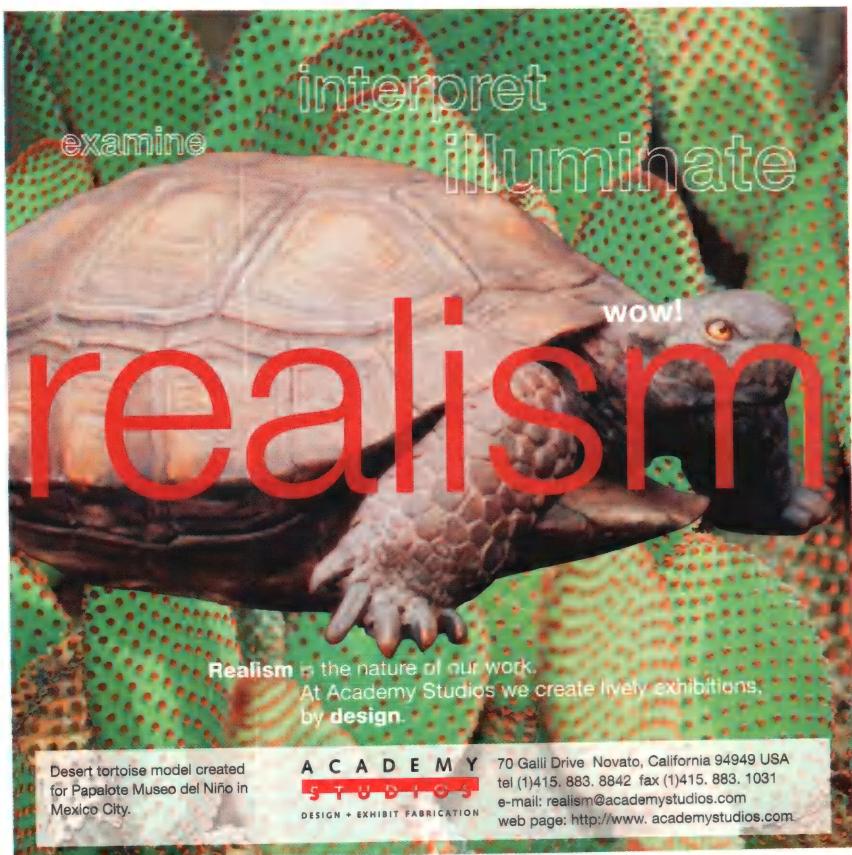
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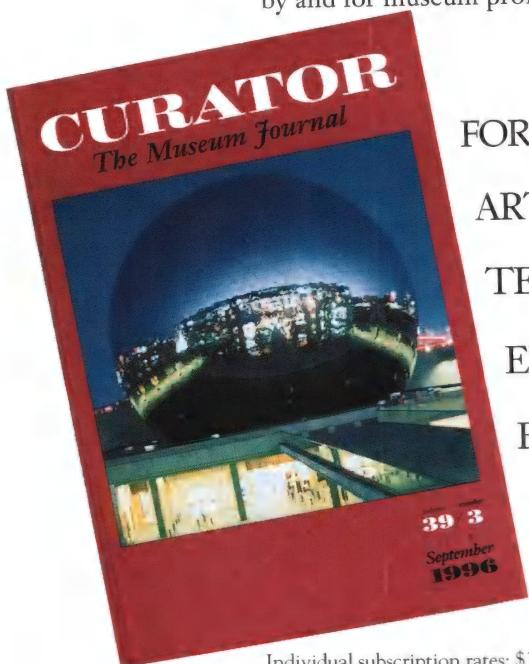
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Alexander Alland, was instrumental in rediscovering and acquiring the work of Jacob A. Riis. Other major collections Mayer secured for MCNY include the Harry T. Peters Collection of Currier and Ives prints, the Wurts Photographic Collection, the Gottscho-Schleisner Photographic Collection, and the Byron Photographic Collection.

In 1958, Macmillan published her book, *Once Upon a City: New York from 1890 to 1910 as Photographed by Byron*. John A. Kouwenhoven, author of the *Columbia Historical Portrait of New York*, wrote that the book was "a work of intelligence and love" whose text "combines fine scholarship with what is even less common—a sensitive appreciation and understanding of the period's significance."

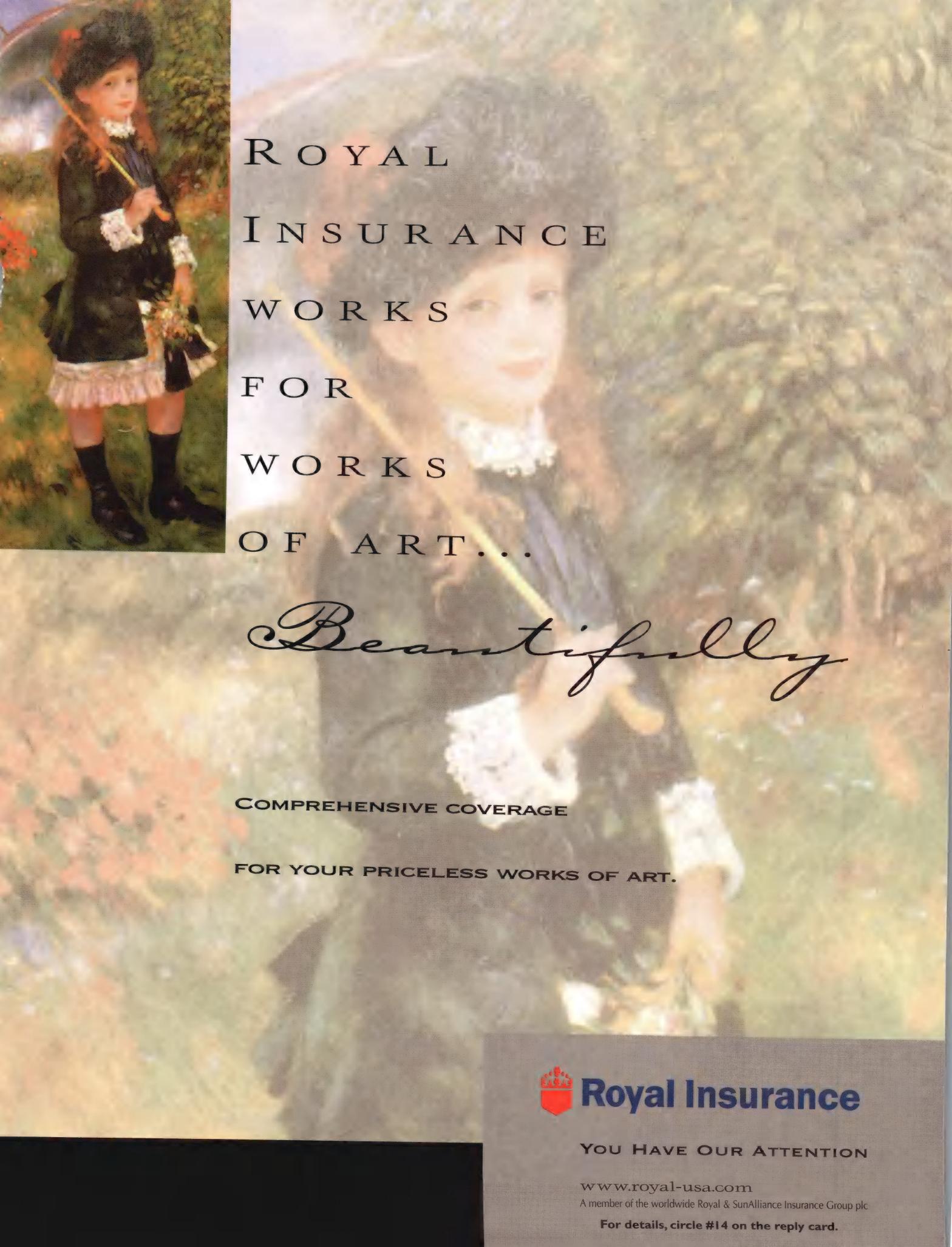
At MCNY, Mayer organized the exhibitions "Currier & Ives and the New York Scene" (1938), "We Cover the New Yorker" (1946), "A Stranger in Manhattan" (1950), and one-person shows of photographs by John Albok (1938), Todd Webb (1946), Erich Hartmann (1956), and Shirley C. Burden (1957).

In 1959, she left MCNY to join the staff of MOMA. As special assistant to photographer Edward Steichen, she worked on major exhibitions, including "The Sense of Abstraction" (1960), "Steichen the Photographer" (1961), and "The Bitter Years" (1962). Mayer was named curator in MOMA's department of photography in 1962, and organized the inaugural installation of the museum's photography galleries in 1964.

In 1995, MCNY organized "Curating New York: The Legacy of Grace M. Mayer," an exhibition that presented many of her accomplishments. The opening of the exhibition, which Mayer attended, was also the setting for an ArtTable-sponsored discussion about women in the museum profession, which focused on Mayer's career as a model of professionalism, dedication, and accomplishment.

There will be a memorial service honoring Grace Mayer at the Museum of the City of New York later this spring.

—Robert R. Macdonald, Director,  
Museum of the City of New York



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# Calendar



**Picasso: The Early Years, 1892-1906**  
Primarily known for his work in cubism, Pablo Picasso spent his early years experimenting with different styles and media. Born in Málaga, Spain, Picasso was drawing and painting by the age of 7, and was enrolled in the School of Fine Arts at La Coruna at the age of 11. His early subject matter was influenced by his travels to Barcelona, Paris, and the Spanish Pyrenees, and reflects his continuing preoccupation with the human form. Organized by the National Gallery of Art and the Museum of

Fine Arts, Boston, this exhibition presents works created by Picasso between the ages of 11 and 25, including paintings, drawings, and pastels from his Blue and Rose periods—so named for the artist's monochromatic palette choices. Approximately 150 works are featured, including pieces never before exhibited in the United States.

*March 30-July 27, 1997:*  
National Gallery of Art,  
Washington, D.C.

*September 10, 1997-*  
*January 4, 1998:*  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Boston

**A. G. Rizzoli: Architect of Magnificent Visions**  
From the 1930s to the '70s, Achilles G. Rizzoli (1896-1981) led a quiet existence as a draftsman for a small San Francisco architectural firm. But he also had a secret mission: to record and interpret the hallucinations he experienced as a result of schizophrenia and other mental illnesses. Rizzoli believed that his visions were divinely inspired, and depicted them as detailed architectural monuments and illustrated poetry and commentary. Organized by the San Diego Museum of Art, this exhibition presents

85 of Rizzoli's drawings of buildings and city plans, as well as his "symbolic sketches"—architectural renderings that represent the artist's family, neighbors, and acquaintances.

*March 22-May 18, 1997:*  
San Diego Museum of Art

*September 6-November 29, 1997:*  
High Museum of Art,  
Atlanta

*January 10-March 8, 1998:*  
Museum of American Folk Art, New York  
*March 27-June 23, 1998:*  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

## Masterpieces from The Pierpont Morgan Library

The Pierpont Morgan Library was originally the private library of one of the leading American financiers of the late 19th century. During that time, Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913) amassed an enormous personal fortune that enabled him to turn a passion for rare books, manuscripts, and works of art into one of the world's greatest collections. In 1924, Pierpont's son Jack converted the library into a public institution, in keeping with his father's desire to share the collection with the world.

"Masterpieces from The Pierpont Morgan Library" presents a brief survey of the library's history and more than 175 works, including original manuscripts by Jane Austen, Mark Twain, and Sylvia Plath; letters of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson; drawings by Dürer, Rembrandt, and Degas; and one of the library's three Gutenberg Bibles.

*Through April 27, 1997:*  
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

*July 1-September 28, 1997:*  
High Museum of Art,  
Atlanta

Opposite: Pablo Picasso, *Spanish Couple Before an Inn* (1900).

Right: Mackintosh's Ladies' Luncheon Room in Glasgow.

Below: Ellen Biddle Shipman designed the Windsor White Garden, Chagrin Falls, Ohio, in 1919. Photo by Carol Betsch.

## Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Today, Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) is celebrated for the architectural, interior, and furniture designs he produced in Glasgow, Scotland, around the turn of the century. Like his contemporary, Frank Lloyd Wright, Mackintosh designed both the exteriors and the interiors of his buildings, creating totally integrated environments. But his talent for design was unappreciated in Britain during his lifetime, and he spent his last years in poverty. This exhibition organized by the Glasgow Museums marks the first American retrospective of

Mackintosh's career, and examines the important role played by his wife and collaborator, Margaret MacDonald. The more than 250 works on display include his textile designs and graphic works, as well as watercolors and landscape paintings. The centerpiece of the exhibition is the recreation of the white and silver *Ladies' Luncheon Room from the Ingram Street Tea Rooms*, one of four Glasgow tea rooms that Mackintosh designed.

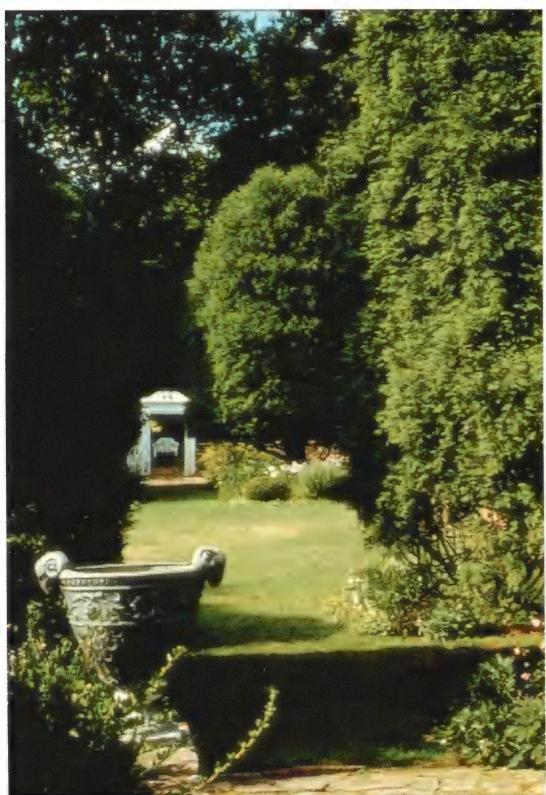
*Through June 22, 1997:*  
Art Institute of Chicago

*August 3-October 12, 1997:*  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art



## The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman 1869-1950

The first decades of the 20th century were a time of great wealth in the United States; thousands of new homes and gardens were constructed all over the country. During this period, landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman became known as "the best flower garden maker in America." Her clients included such wealthy industrialists as the Fords, Seiberlings, and du Ponts. By the time she died in 1950, Shipman had designed more than 650 residential landscapes across the country. However, only a few of her gardens are still in existence. This exhibition presents newly commissioned photographs of restored Shipman gardens and reproductions of archival images from the collection of the Cornell University Libraries. Also on view are Shipman's original



plans and drawings, including one created for the Bronx Botanical Gardens in 1928. The exhibition was organized by the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, N.Y., and the Library of American Landscape History, Amherst, Mass.

*Through April 4, 1997:*  
Paine Webber Art Gallery, New York

*April 12-June 15, 1997:*  
Museums at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, N.Y.

*August 25-October 26, 1997:*  
Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, Auburn, N.Y.

*June 6-September 6, 1998:*  
Akron Art Museum, Ohio

## Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures from the Russian Imperial Court

From 1613 until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Russia was ruled by the Romanovs. Members of the

dynasty included Peter the Great (1672-1725), who modernized the country, and Catherine the Great (1729-1796), who introduced the French language and style to the Russian court. Three centuries of rule enabled the Romanovs to assemble priceless collections of jewels, costumes, paintings, and religious artifacts. Today, the Russian imperial collections are considered among the finest in the world. For the first time in history, the Russian government has allowed many of the royal artifacts to travel to the United States for this exhibition organized by the American-Russian Cultural Cooperation Foundation and the Trust for Museum Exhibitions. The 250 objects on display include more than 115 jewels and uncut gems from the Russian State Diamond Fund, which was established by Peter the Great in 1719.



Stow Wengenroth, *September Storm* (1951). From "Images of a New England Seacoast."

Through April 11, 1997:  
Corcoran Gallery of  
Art, Washington, D.C.

May 11-July 13, 1997:  
Museum of Fine Arts,  
Houston

August 16-  
October 26, 1997:  
San Diego Museum  
of Art

November 2, 1997-  
January 11, 1998:  
Memphis Brooks  
Museum of Art,  
Memphis, Tenn.

### Images of a New England Seacoast, 1900-1950

New England's rocky shorelines and quiet fishing harbors have offered artists diversified subject matter for centuries. Fishing towns such as Rockport and Gloucester, located along the coast of Cape Ann, Mass., were home to many American painters, including Winslow Homer. This exhibition organized by Smith Kramer Fine Art Services and the Rockport Art Association features 49 paintings from the association's permanent collection, and includes works by

artists such as Childe Hassam, Aldro Hibbard, John A. Cook, and Lester G. Hornby. While these artists varied in palette and technique, they all shared a fondness for depicting New England's seacoast, salt marshes, and fishing villages.

April 4-May 11, 1997:  
Portsmouth Museums,  
Portsmouth, Va.

January 4-February 22,  
1998:  
Bartlesville Museum,  
Bartlesville, Okla.

May 24-July 12, 1998:  
Rahr West Art Muse-  
um, Manitowoc, Wis.

October 11-November  
29, 1998:  
Art Museum of South  
Texas, Corpus Christi

January 3-February 21,  
1999:  
West Bend Art Muse-  
um, West Bend, Wis.

### Munch and Women: Image and Myth

Organized by Art Services International, this exhibition focuses on Norwegian artist Edvard Munch's images of women, which have long been

read as a key to his personality. Because Munch (1863-1944) wrote so extensively about his anxieties, and because his relationships with women were linked to some of his most pessimistic images, many of his contemporaries believed that he disliked women. "Munch and Women: Image and Myth" separates the fact and the fiction about the artist, and places the artist's work in a broader context. Several of the portraits of family members and female patrons on display reveal that Munch often portrayed women in terms of their personalities and achievements. The 71 paintings and prints in the exhibition are from the Epstein Family Collection in Washington, D.C., the most extensive holding of Munch's work outside Europe.

Through March 9, 1997:  
San Diego Museum of  
Art

April 5-June 1, 1997:  
Portland Museum of  
Art, Oreg.

July 18-  
September 7, 1997:  
Columbia Museum of  
Art, Columbia, S.C.

September 20-  
November 30, 1997:  
Yale University Art  
Gallery, New Haven,  
Conn.

### Albert Bloch: The American Blue Rider

Albert Bloch (1882-1962) achieved fame as the only American member of Der Blaue Reiter (The Blue Rider), an association of expressionist painters that formed in Munich in 1911. The group's members, who included Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Paul Klee, shared a desire to express spirituality in their work, and were among the first to abandon the accepted academic style for the bold colors and abstractions of expressionism. This retrospective of Bloch's oeuvre presents work from his years in Europe (1908-1921), including the brightly colored images of harlequins and pierrots he produced in Germany. Also on display are the ghostly, delicately toned paintings Bloch created during his tenure as head of the department of drawing and painting at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, from 1923 to 1947. The exhibition was organized by the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus.

Through March 16,  
1997:  
Nelson-Atkins Muse-  
um of Art, Kansas City,  
Mo.

April 16-June 29, 1997:  
Städtische Galerie im  
Lenbachhaus, Munich,  
Germany

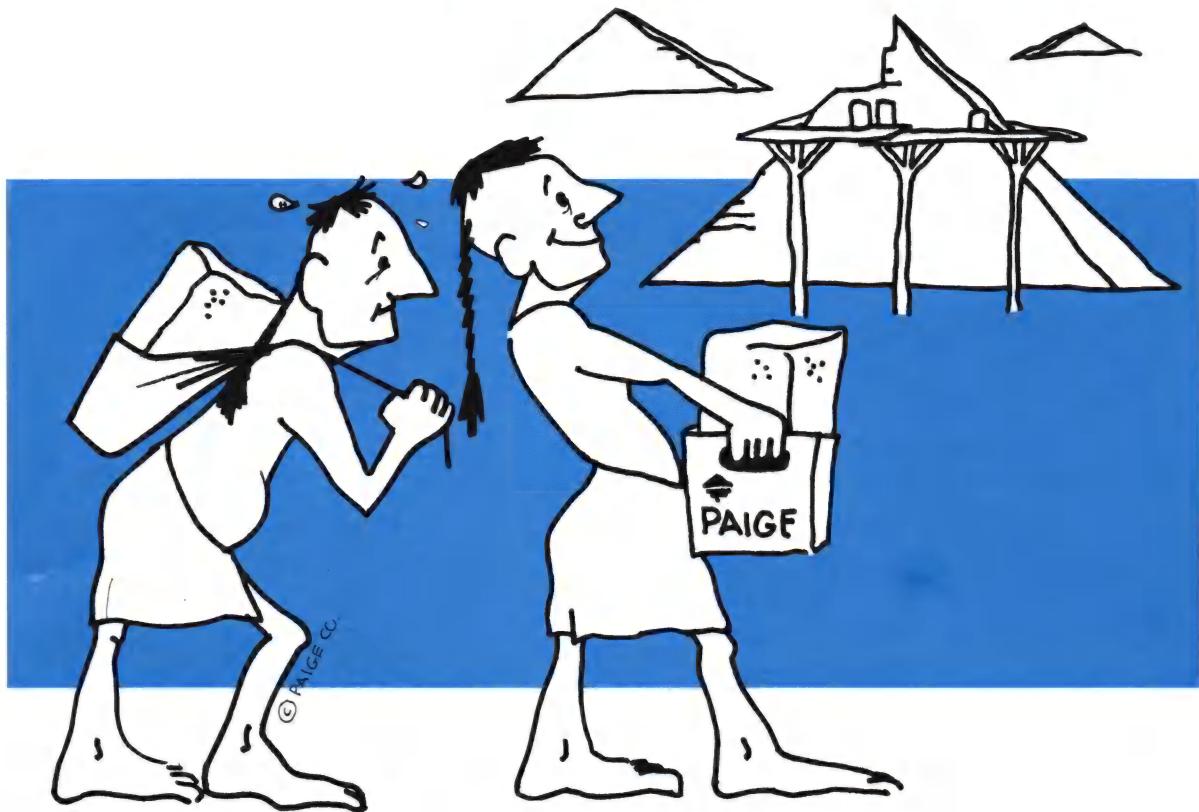
October 3-  
December 7, 1997:  
Delaware Art Museum,  
Wilmington

### The Peale Family: Creation of an American Legacy, 1770-1870

This exhibition of 145 paintings celebrates the achievements of the Peale family of artists, active in Philadelphia and other northeastern cities during the 18th and 19th centuries. The head of the family, Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827), was so devoted to painting that he named several of his 17 children after artists, including Rembrandt, Rubens, Raphaelle, Titian, and Angelica Kauffmann. Peale and his family created portraits of more than 2,000 people, and thus helped to document the life of the nation's first century. Three themes are explored in this show organized by the Trust for Museum Exhibitions: the idea of family in America, the influence of changing political and social ideology on artistic production, and the uses and functions of art. Works on display include portraits, miniatures, and still lifes.

Through April 6, 1997:  
M. H. de Young  
Memorial Museum,  
San Francisco

April 26-July 6, 1997:  
Corcoran Gallery  
of Art,  
Washington, D.C. ■



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# Noteworthy



The new Arizona Science Center's architecture is intended to represent the surrounding desert landscape.

**T**he Arizona Science Center, Phoenix, formerly the Arizona Museum of Science and Technology, opens in April. The new name reflects the institution's commitment to educating its local citizenry. Exhibits and programs at the center will present science in the context of life and work in Arizona, and answer such questions as How do Arizonans live with the sun?

The center's new building reflects this local orientation. Architect Antoine Predock designed an abstract sculptural representation of the surrounding desert, complete with peak, butte, canyon, and mesa. The large concrete base of the building, which represents the raw power of the desert, rises into a reflective, metal tower that symbolizes advanced technology. Predock envisioned the center as a "safe haven" from the hot Arizona climate. To protect the museum's collections and visitors from the sun, he designed the building with thick walls for thermal stability and a limited number of windows, and planted leafy trees outside. Visitors reach the entrance by walking down a flight of stairs, which to the architect represents a descent into the coolness of the earth.

The city of Phoenix provided \$30 million of the \$48-million construction cost. The 120,000-square-foot building includes 40,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor exhibit space. There, visitors can see approximately 100 displays on living with the sun, which examine issues ranging from why the desert gets so cold at night to how patio misters work. Other exhibits feature Arizona scientists' work on nutrition and immune systems, and innovations in computer technology. The center also has a 285-seat theater, a 200-seat planetarium with a 60-foot dome, classrooms, and a gift shop.

The **Chicago Children's Museum** and the Chicago Department of Aviation have opened a permanent exhibit at O'Hare International Airport. Architect Peter J. Exley designed the 2,205-square-foot exhibit for children ages 12 and younger and their families. Visitors to "Kids on the Fly" can load baggage at a kid-size luggage station, sit in the cockpit of a cargo plane, and monitor airport communications in a simulated control tower. There is also a touch-sensitive computer screen that allows children to keep track of the arrival and departure times of actual flights.

The new **Hollywood Entertainment Museum**, Hollywood, Calif., presents the history of the

movie capital from the silent era to the present day. The 33,000-square-foot museum examines the four components of the entertainment industry: television, film, radio, and sound recording. A photo gallery on permanent display in the rotunda is presided over by the Goddess of Entertainment, a statue that is more than 15 feet tall and serves as the museum's official hostess. Other features include a miniature replica of 1936 Hollywood, including theaters, churches, billboards, houses, and stores, and the original set from the television show, "Cheers."

The **Harvard University Art Museums**, Cambridge, Mass., have renovated the Straus

Center for Conservation and Technical Studies. Established in 1928, the center is the oldest fine arts conservation treatment, research, and training facility in the United States. Architect Samuel Anderson removed several thick walls and annexed space on the roof to increase the building's square footage by more than 2,000 feet. A wing was built to house an X-ray facility, library, seminar room, and administrative offices. The \$6.3-million renovation also installed climate control systems for the first time.

In February, the oldest African-American museum in the United States, the **Hampton University Museum**, Hampton, Va., moved

to a new location. The move to the former Huntington Memorial Library, a 34,300-square-foot Beaux Arts building constructed in 1903, more than doubles the museum's exhibition space from 5,000 to 12,000 square feet. Local architects Livas Group, Inc., renovated the building at a cost of \$4.5 million, retaining the oculus in the 22-foot-wide dome near the building's entrance. The museum, which now has 10 exhibition galleries, and expanded classroom, storage, and office space, reopens to the public in April.

After a two-year construction and renovation program, the University of Washington's **Henry Art Gallery**, Seattle, reopens in

April. The new museum combines designer Carl F. Gould's 1927 brick and cast-stone building with a three-level modernist expansion constructed of glass, cast stone, concrete, and textured stainless steel. To integrate the Henry into its surrounding landscape, architects Charles Gwathmey and the Seattle-based firm Loschky Marquardt & Nelson carved into the hill underneath and around the original structure. The \$17.5-million renovation increases the museum's size from 10,000 to 46,000 square feet, and includes 14,000 square feet of exhibition space, a 154-seat auditorium, café, public plaza, and classroom studio, as well as expanded storage and research facilities. **M**

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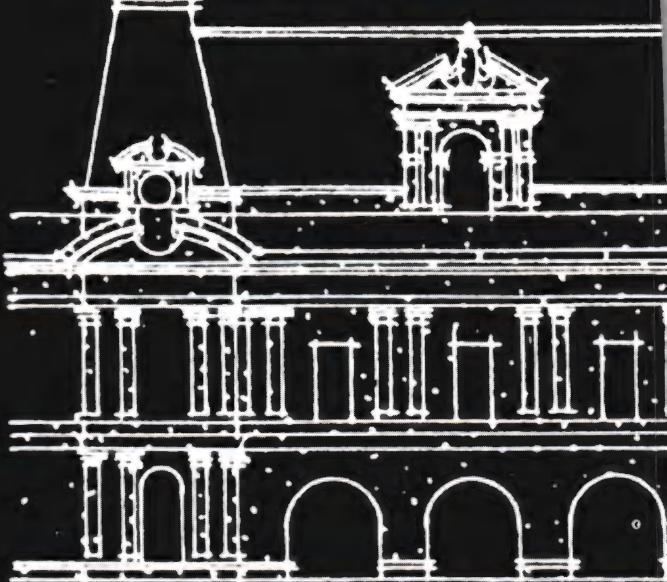
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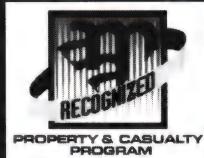
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# People

**Arthur H. Wolf** to president, High Desert Museum, Bend, Oreg.

**Peter C. Sutton** to director, and **Patrice Welch Schulze** to associate director for development, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn.

**Steven K. Hamp** to president, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Mich.



**B. Byron Price** to director, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyo.

**Jett Lamkin** to marketing and public relations officer, Kreeger Museum, Washington, D.C.

**Jennifer Perry** to registrar, Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, Fla.

**Gregory Paul Andorfer** to executive director, Maryland Science Center, Baltimore.

**Jamesina E. Henderson** to executive director, California Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles.

**Dana Self** to curator, and **Maria Cocchiarelli** to director of education, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art and Design, Kansas City, Mo.

**Cheryl Munyer** to curatorial assistant, The Hermitage, Hermitage, Tenn.



**Amanda Rivera Lopez** to education and volunteer coordinator, Barnum Museum, Bridgeport, Conn.

**G. Donald Adams** to director of marketing and visitor programs, Automotive Hall of Fame, Dearborn, Mich.

**Ivy Barsky** to director of education, **Alan Appel** to grants and foundations officer, **Martin Wolf** to public relations and marketing officer, and **Ilana Abramovitch** to museum educator, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.

**Andrew Mutch** to museum curator/historian, United States Golf Association Museum and Library, Far Hills, N.J.

**Scott M. Brown** to executive director, Spartanburg County Museum of Art, Spartanburg, S.C.

**Christine Randall** to head curator, Door County Maritime Museum, Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

**Joe Urschel** to deputy director, Newseum, Arlington, Va.

**Kristin K. Wilson** to curator, Fredda Turner Dunham Children's Museum, Museum of the Southwest, Midland, Tex.

**Greta Bahnemann** to exhibit curator, Oshkosh Public Museum, Oshkosh, Wis.

**Marla Prather** to curator of 20th-century art, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

**Mona F. Slaton** to director of visitor services, **Alice Irvin** to director of marketing and communications, **Kristin Baxter** to museum educator, **Alan Witchey** to educational programs assistant, and **Stephen B. Johnson** to public and media relations associate, Indianapolis Museum of Art.



**David M. Kahn** to executive director, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

**John VanAusdall** to president and CEO, and **Sharon B. Hunt** to senior development associate, Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis.



**Gail Andrews Techsel** to director, Birmingham Museum of Art.

**Nancy D. Connelly** to executive director, American Clock and Watch Museum, Bristol, Conn.

**Jan Shupert-Arck** to education coordinator, and **Guy William Young** to marketing director, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Ind.

**Lynne Spriggs** to curator of contemporary art, and **Neil Watson** to curator of exhibitions, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Fla.

**John E. Schloder** to director of Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebr.

**Arnold Cogswell, Jr.** to executive director, Hickory Museum of Art, Inc., Hickory, N.C.



**Fred Nahwoosky** to director, Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, College of Santa Fe, N.Mex.

**Janelle M. Carley** to museum educator, Jewish Museum, San Francisco.

**Craig R. Olson** to director, Sioux City Public Museum, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Debbie Haughton** to operations manager, Children's Museum of Memphis, Tenn.

**Charlotte Valentine** to Chris-Craft archivist, Mariners' Museum, Newport News, Va. M

*Please send personnel information to Jane Lusaka, Associate Editor, Museum News, AAM, 1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005.*

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# Titanic: An In-Depth Look

BY JANE LUSAKA



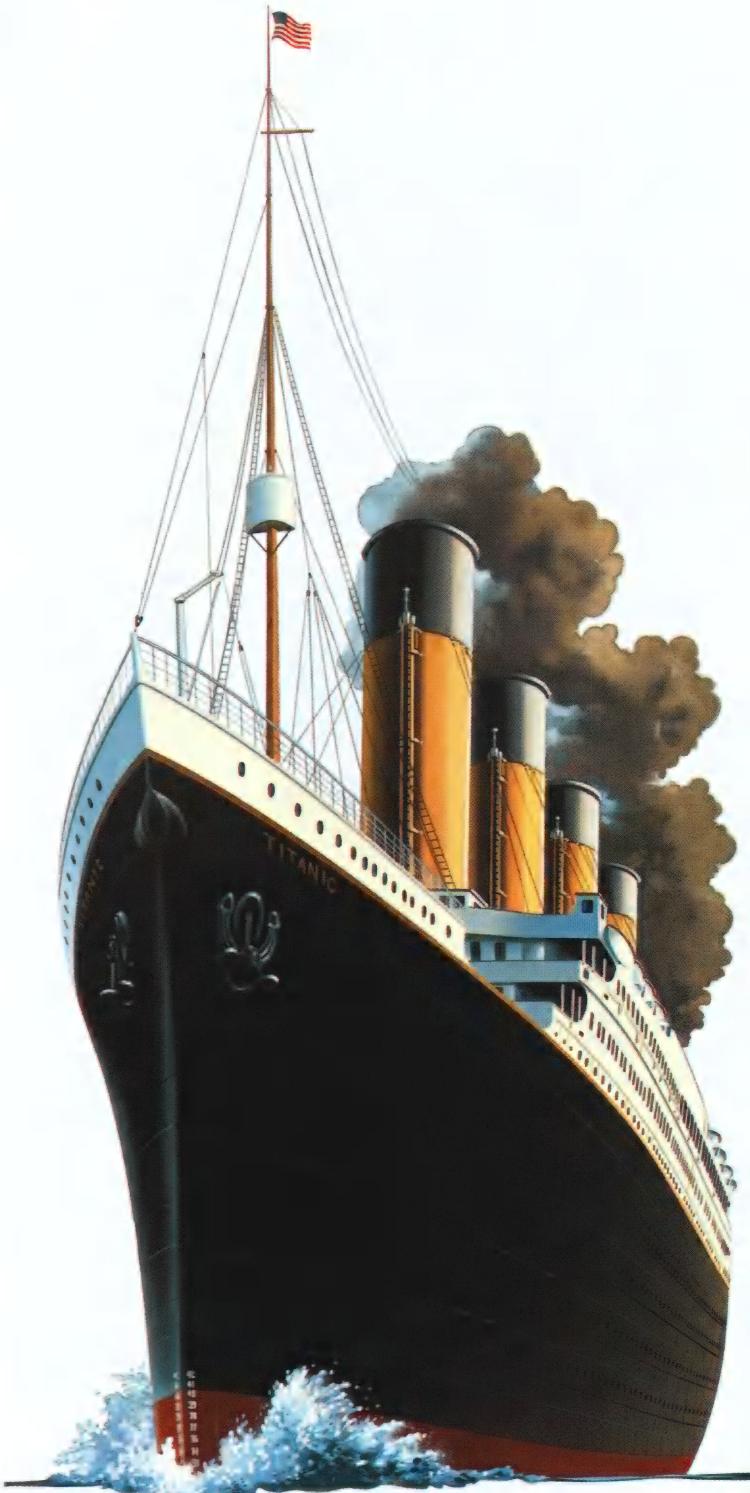
**O**n April 12, 1912, excited spectators gathered on the dock at Southampton, England, to watch the *Titanic* embark on her maiden voyage to New York. It was a momentous occasion. Billed as the world's largest and most luxurious ocean liner, the *Titanic* also was considered the safest. The officers of Lloyds of London, reasoning that the probability of an accident was one in a million, eagerly insured the cross-Atlantic trip. And the White Star Line, the ship's owner, was so certain the *Titanic* was unsinkable that it provided enough lifeboats for only half of the 2,228 people on board. To her passengers and crew, the 46,500-ton vessel seemed almost invincible. In their eyes, the *Titanic* embodied the success of the industrial age and the promise of the modern world.

Today, few people are unaware of this story's sad ending: the *Titanic*'s first voyage was also her last. On April 14, just before midnight, she struck an iceberg off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. Water immediately poured into the hull and began to flood the front of the ship. Less than three hours later, the *Titanic* sunk to the depths of the North Atlantic, taking with her 1,523 men, women, and children. Only 705 people survived.

This tale of hope and tragedy is the subject of a new exhibition on display at the Memphis Convention Center from April 3 to Sept. 30. Called simply "Titanic," the 50,000-square-foot presentation documents the ship's construction and fateful voyage, the 1985 discovery of the shipwreck by the American and French navies, and the ongoing recovery and conservation of the *Titanic*'s artifacts. It includes more than 300 objects recovered from the ship by RMS Titanic, Inc., the court-authorized salvor of the wreckage site. The exhibition is organized by RMS Titanic and Wonders: The Memphis International Cultural Series, a nonprofit division of the city of Memphis. The organizers plan an international tour and are currently in negotiations with museums around the world.

George Tulloch, president of RMS Titanic, believes that the *Titanic*'s story reminds people "how precious life is, how lucky they are, . . . how time or social status or age or color or religion do not make any difference. There is a very fragile thread that connects us to life . . . and that thread is the same for everybody." According to Wonders Curator Steve

Women's diamond (above) and diamond and sapphire (right) rings excavated from the *Titanic* shipwreck are a testament to the wealth of many of the ill-fated passengers.



Masler, the exhibition tries "to show the complete story. Why does it mean so much to us in the latter part of the 20th century? Why does this disaster fascinate us?"

It is hard to imagine that anyone could be as naive and trusting as the *Titanic's* passengers. Told that there had been an accident, they kept dancing while the orchestra played the popular tunes of the day. Even after they were commanded to enter the lifeboats, many people refused to believe that the ship was in any real danger. The *Titanic* "represented man's arrogance and humility," says Masler. "Closely followed by World War I, it heralded an age of disappointment. It changed our view of the world."

Masler faced a slight problem in that most people are familiar with the *Titanic's* story. "Everybody knows what happened," he says. "It sunk, and we let people know that right at the beginning." But the curator realized that visitors would be curious about how the passengers and crew behaved as the evacuation of the ship proceeded. "Of course, there were examples of great cowardice," he

says. "But on the whole, people were very civilized, probably more so than we would be today. People knew that there was no more room on the lifeboats, but there was no mad rush, no pushing, no shoving. They just stood back and let the boats go." By recreating the experiences of the *Titanic's* passengers and crew, the exhibition poses a simple question to its visitors: What might you have done?

Much of the convention center's lower level has been converted into several galleries that represent the *Titanic's* decks, staterooms, and cabins. And throughout the exhibition, artifacts recovered from the wreckage help to tell the story. Visitors first watch a video presentation that describes what the world was like in 1912. Then they enter the first gallery, "The Construction of the *Titanic*," which features an 18-foot scale model of the ship; original blueprints from Harland and Wolff, the ship's builders; and a full-sized reconstruction of a portion of the *Titanic's* hull. Large objects from the ship, such as connecting rods from the steam engines and water heaters, are displayed in this gallery, as is

information about the White Star Line and the ship's designers and funders.

The "Life on Board" gallery introduces the passengers and crew through photographs and objects, such as a steward's jacket that still bears its owner's name, Broome, written in laundry marker on the inside collar. According to Masler, the jacket was "a wadded-up, black ball when it was recovered" by RMS *Titanic's* divers. It was conserved at the LP3 Conservation Labs in France, and now, "while it doesn't look new, it looks pretty good." The gallery is decorated with white enameled columns and black-and-white tiled floors, modeled after those in the ship's first-class salons, to give visitors the feeling of what it was like to walk the ship with the wealthy and the famous. There are also "vignettes" about the second- and third-class passengers, says Masler. "We have a really interesting photograph, taken before the ship sailed, of a second-class stateroom, showing a dresser and a washstand. . . . Many of the accoutrements on the washstand are on display in vitrines in front of the

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photograph." Other objects on view here include a stained-glass window from the first-class dining room, and an upholstery bag and cobbler's tools, which probably belonged to passengers traveling third-class.

Masler, who consulted with *Titanic* scholars Charles Haas and John P. Eaton, relied heavily on the ship's artifacts to propel the exhibition's narrative. But "it is difficult to portray the disaster story only through objects," he says. Thus the "Night of April 14, 1912" gallery includes eight drawings of various stages of the disaster, several kiosks that highlight the experiences of various passengers and crew members, and an audio tour with oral histories of *Titanic* survivors, some of whom are still alive. "Here, time slows down for the visitor," says Masler. "We break things down into 15-minute segments . . . to show what happened to people during that last hour on board the ship."

For Masler, the most emotional area is the life-size reconstruction of the *Titanic*'s deck, complete with a railing from which visitors can look down on

full-size replicas of the ship's lifeboats. He hopes that visitors will experience the same realization that must have come to the *Titanic*'s passengers: There simply were not enough boats to carry everyone to safety.

The "Rescue" gallery relates how people were saved by the *Carpathia*. This was the only ship to respond to the *Titanic*'s distress signals and rockets, though there were other vessels in the area, including the *California*, which might have saved some people if only its radio had been on. One of the most interesting questions answered in this section is *who* made it off the *Titanic*. Sixty percent of the first-class passengers survived, compared to 40 percent of the second- and 25 percent of the third-class passengers. "Titanic" reveals that the class distinctions present in Edwardian society also existed on the ship. "Most of the [crew's] attention was given to the first-class passengers," says Masler. It was a long time before people in the third-class cabins, which were in the rear and below deck, heard about the accident. And, apparently aware that they were

considered a low priority, many third-class passengers did not even try to get off the ship.

The immediate and lasting effects of the *Titanic*'s sinking are documented through newspaper accounts, video clips, posters, and souvenirs on display in the "Aftermath" gallery. Following the tragedy, maritime law underwent important changes. For the first time, ships were required to carry enough lifeboats to hold all passengers and to operate their wireless communication equipment 24 hours a day. "Titanic" also explains how the sinking of the ship changed people's attitudes, ending confidence in humanity's ability to control and subjugate nature. The exhibition makes people think about why the accident happened, says Tulloch. "What was our responsibility? Why was it so important to risk people's lives, and why do we do it again and again?"

The final galleries move the visitor into the present day, depicting RMS *Titanic*'s expeditions to the wreck site and the various conservation processes

(Please turn to Exhibits, page 51)

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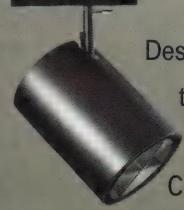
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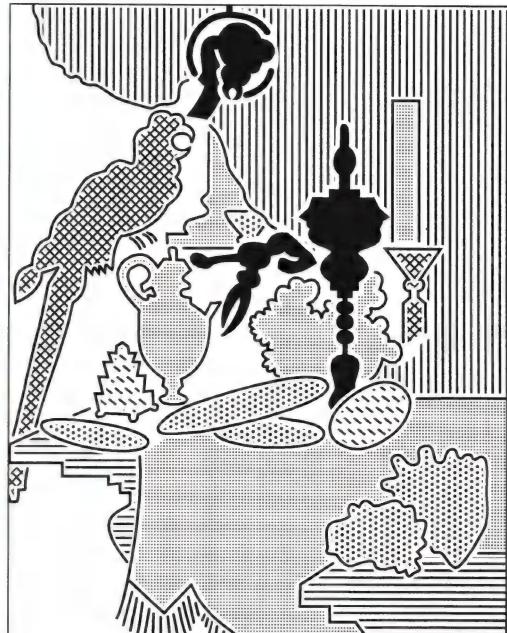
# Fixing What's Baroque

BY CHARLES K. STEINER

People who are blind can use a tactile diagram (far right) to feel various aspects of Jan Davidsz. de Heem's *Still Life with Parrots* (late 1640s) in *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century*.

## Baroque Art in the Seventeenth

**Century.** By Art Education for the Blind, Inc., and Paula L. Gerson, Ph.D. Illustrations by Teresa Kardoulas. New York: Art Education for the Blind, Inc., 1997. Spiral-bound book and six audio cassettes (running time: approximately 9 hours). \$125.00.



Twenty-five years ago, my first college-level art history course was in 16th and 17th century French art, and the textbook was Sir Anthony Blunt's famous and heavy tome on the subject, *Art and Architecture in France: 1500-1700*. The book sold for \$29.50, and I remember that my parents were shocked at the expense. What was more shocking, in retrospect, was how little I gained from the course or from Blunt's book.

How I wish that I'd had something like *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century* to orient me to 16th and 17th century art and, more important, to teach me how to look at the period's architecture, sculpture, and painting. *Baroque Art* is the first volume published in a series called *Art History through Touch and Sound: A Multisensory Guide for the Blind and Visually Impaired*. This publication's great contribution to the field of art history rests with its usefulness as an introduction to the 17th century for both the blind and the sighted student. Unfortunately, however, the various components of the publication package make it as unwieldy as Blunt's book, and the price

of the series is as out-of-reach for many individuals. (The cost of the entire 22-volume set is \$2,350.)

*Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century* is not a book *per se*, but a combination of audio-cassettes and a booklet that illustrates the works discussed with 29 tactile diagrams (braille-like drawings that allow users to feel various aspects of an artwork with their fingertips) and 19 black-and-white photographs. Taken together, they present a cursory survey of the 17th century. Because the package was not fully produced at press time, this evaluation is based solely on the script for the audio tapes, one actual tactile diagram, and photocopies of 28 others. A guide explaining how to use the various package components was included with the review materials, as were several press releases.

The audio text is subdivided geographically into sections such as "Baroque Art in Italy" or "Baroque Art in Holland." While the primary discussion focuses on paintings, there are occasional discussions of representative works of architecture and sculpture. Although I was not able to listen to many examples,

according to the publisher, the tapes will incorporate "interpretive sound compositions." The explanatory press release says, "With the aid of on-site ambience sound and interpretive sound compositions, the sense of hearing is drafted into the pursuit of visual understanding. The reader explores the bustling sounds of St. Peter's piazza. By walking through the oval arms of the colonnade and hearing the echoes of footfalls, the reader acquires a sense of the spatial dynamics of Bernini's remarkable outdoor space. To understand Rubens' painting, *The Gathering of the Manna*, an original electronic musical composition serves as an auditory analogue, offering a soundscape that evokes the dramatically charged scene of Moses and his people gathering food in the desert." Hmm... . . . Perhaps it is just as well that most of these "interpretive sound compositions" were not available.

The narrator refers repeatedly to the tactile diagrams, and the text is laced with travel directions to help the reader's hand, such as this passage about Gentileschi's *Judith and Maidservant with Head of Holofernes*: "Begin in the upper-

(Please turn to Books, page 60)



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# To Be There or Not to Be There: Presence, Telepresence, and the Future of Museums

BY WILLIAM J. MITCHELL AND OLIVER B. R. STRIMPEL

We rarely choose to think of it this way, but presence consumes resources and costs money. Typically, it costs us more (in hotel charges or office rents, for example) to be present in places where many people would like to be than it does to be present in places where few people want to be. And it costs us time and effort to get to places to meet people, conduct transactions, see performances, and sight-see. Being in the right place, at the right time, can be expensive.

In the past, being "present" meant that your body was there, in a specific location, and that you could interact face-to-face with others who were also there. Now, electronic telepresence and asynchronous presence are additional possibilities. In general, these are less intense than full face-to-face presence, but they can be achieved with greater convenience and at lower expenditure of time and resources. So, in our daily lives, we continually have to choose among different grades of presence with different properties and different associated costs. In other words, there is an emerging economy of presence. Within it we make choices among available alternatives and allocate resources to meet demands that are made on us and to achieve what we want.

## Implications for Museums and Art Galleries

Museums and art galleries maintain collections, present exhibitions, and hold public events in which curators convey content by selecting and arranging artifacts and providing commentary. Shows may reach their audiences through face-to-face contact or telepresence, and in synchronous or asynchronous mode. In the following cross-classification table,

traditional "high presence" forms of museum experience appear in the upper half, and more recent, electronically mediated "low presence" forms are in the lower half.

	<i>Synchronous</i>	<i>Asynchronous</i>
Presence	Live guided tour	Self-guided tour Audio-guided tour
Telepresence	Live broadcast tour Videoconference presentation	Printed catalogue CD tour WWW virtual museum

A traditional, "high presence" approach—particularly common in the great art and archaeological museums—is for a docent to provide a live guided tour of the collection. Alternatively, visitors might take self-guided tours with the assistance of written captions or hand-held audio players; this is less interactive, but it makes fewer staff demands, allows visitors to proceed at their own pace, and doesn't require guides and visitors to coordinate their schedules. Video technology provides the possibility of conducting tours for remote audiences; QVC, the home shopping channel, has carried tours of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston—paid for with merchandising tie-ins to the museum shops. And "virtual tours" can be provided through a variety of media: traditional printed catalogues, CDs, and WWW "virtual museum" sites.

One of the important draws of traditional museums is the thrill we experience from being face-to-face with important, unique objects. There is only one *Mona Lisa*, and even though one has

to jostle for a spot in front of the glass-enclosed canvas, it is still exciting to be there. The object's importance may stem from its intrinsic quality as a work of art or invention, from its rarity (as with archaeological relics), or from its association with a notable person. For example, the Whirlwind at The Computer Museum in Boston, one of the first computers ever built, contains the first-ever use of magnetic core memory. The ability to see the first core memory stack, and inspect an actual 32-by-32 core plane from any angle, focuses the mind and is fascinating to anyone who understands the significance of this invention. Seeing the original helps conjure up an image of the inventors, the challenges that they had to overcome, and the realization that it could have worked out differently.

The possessions or creations of famous people also have an aura and a capacity to evoke associations of important past events, which attracts visitors. The prices fetched by objects used by U.S. presidents, for example, testify to this phenomenon. Perhaps paradoxically, the value of such objects is increased, not diminished, by the widespread availability of reproductions. The more that reproductions make an object familiar, the more people value the original.

Catalogues, CDs, and on-line virtual museums can show superb reproductions of objects like the Whirlwind. Indeed, in some ways, they can show them better—for example, by providing 3-D digital models that can be viewed from any angle and taken apart at will. The Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, Germany, has published a CD that shows 100 chairs arranged in galleries; you can look around with QuickTime VR, select a chair to see it from different angles, and read its label. This sort of thing has great

value, but something is also lost; the aura—the sense of uniqueness and special connection to a historical moment—is inseparable from the original and is filtered out in even the most accurate and beautifully made reproductions.

Traditional and virtual museums also differ in their presentation of scale. As architects know particularly well, scale is important. A distant view affects us differently than a mountain towering over us. Similarly, physical proximity to objects or built environments within museums creates an immediate impact based on scale, both large and small. Examples of awe-inspiring, large-scale objects abound in museums: the brontosaurus skeleton, a 50-foot totem pole, the walls of Nineveh. By contrast, the most precious objects from the Tutankhamen exhibition, blown up to enormous size on posters, were, in reality, only a few inches tall. Built exhibit environments that engulf the visitor can also derive much of their power from sheer scale. The giant heart at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, the coal mine at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, and the Walk-Through Computer at The Computer Museum are all good examples.

Photographic reproductions and most digital simulations, on the other hand, tend to even out scales to fill the available display space. Most of us probably recall the experience of seeing the original of some widely reproduced painting for the first time and suddenly realizing that it was much larger or much smaller than we had thought. High-quality immersive display devices have the potential to remedy this deficiency, though, and even to provide effects of dramatic scale change—for example, simulating motion through the human body at tiny scale, through the solar system at massive scale, or through an unbuilt work of architecture that would otherwise be seen only in small drawings.

A closely related issue is level of detail. Digital reproductions, by definition, have finite, fixed, spatial, and color resolution. Since paintings, for instance, may be very large and filled with intricate detail, and since doubling the spatial resolution of a digital reproduction quadruples the amount of information needed to encode it in uncompressed form, resolution limitations can be very serious

even in contexts where storage is inexpensive and high-bandwidth networks are available. Furthermore, even the highest-resolution two-dimensional digital image “flattens” a painting; it captures little of the three-dimensional texture of brush-strokes and canvas, of variations in specularity from matte to shiny, and of the build-up of transparent layers that produces subtly different appearances from different angles and under different lighting conditions.

Where digital virtual museums—both on-line, and packaged on media like CDs—really shine is in their capacity to widen access to collections. Even the most centrally located major museums of the traditional sort are geographically constrained in their capacity to attract visitors; they can never make themselves available to more than a tiny fraction of those who might be interested in them. And even the largest, organized as they now are for blockbuster shows, are limited in their daily throughputs. Even worse, many important art collections are housed in venues that are understaffed and not physically capable of handling large numbers of visitors. And some exhibits, such as watercolor paintings, are so delicate that they cannot be put on view for extensive periods. But once a collection has been encoded digitally, network and server capacities are the only fundamental limitations on accessibility. An on-line virtual museum can inexpensively serve a huge, worldwide clientele, seven days a week and 24 hours a day.

The other great advantage of digital virtual museums is the flexibility of exploration that they provide. In traditional museums, the grouping of exhibits into rooms imposes a fixed classification—sometimes a very tendentious and ideologically loaded one, and the circulation system is a hardwired access path. Such organizations may be changed from time to time, but the effort of doing so is significant. Yet, through use of hyperlinking, sophisticated indexing, search engines, and so on, virtual museums can overcome these traditional limitations and allow visitors to explore collections in flexible and highly personalized ways.

The down-side to this personalization is the loss of social interaction. People often go to traditional museums in groups; families, school parties, and

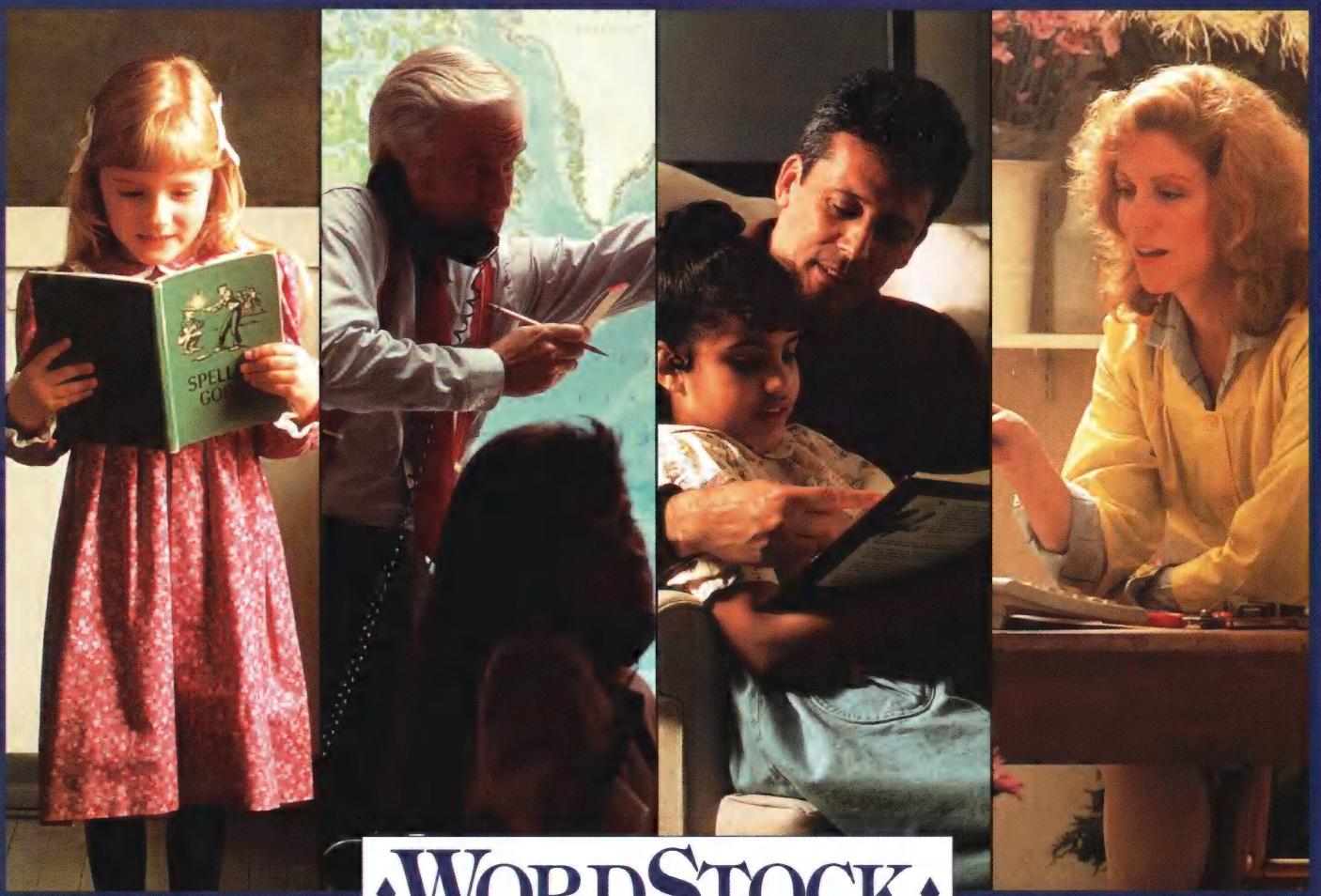
friends can enjoy spontaneous and informal interaction while visiting an exhibit together. The simultaneity of experience stimulates the sharing of reactions and often leads to conversations that build from this experience. How many conversations about flight begin when visitors to the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum are greeted by the Wright Flyer? Or about the Spanish Civil War when confronting Picasso’s *Guernica* at New York’s Museum of Modern Art? This sort of interaction is often the most valued part of the experience, and it occurs effortlessly in physical settings. Early forms of virtual museums have not provided it, though, of course, sophisticated shared virtual environments might.

Thus the “high-presence” and “low-presence” forms of museums and galleries have their respective up-sides and down-sides. Here is the summary:

High presence	Low presence
High cost	Low cost
Fixed location	Flexible locations
Fixed opening hours	Flexible opening hours
Limited numbers of visitors	Potentially unlimited numbers of visitors
Navigation on foot	Hyperlink navigation
Limited to on-site collection	Can combine resources of dispersed sites
Aura of the original	Aura is lost
True scale	Variable scale
Unlimited detail	Limited detail
Group experience	Individual experience
Contextualized	Decontextualized

We can expect that traditional and newer electronic forms will coexist in some mix. Indeed, the emerging electronic possibilities are already combining with established institutions and venues to yield some very interesting hybrids. At London’s National Gallery, for example, visitors may begin a tour by entering a computer-filled room. Here they can explore a digital version of the collection at very high speed, without wearisome walking, using sophisticated navigation tools, and getting the benefit of lots of annotation and commentary. They can print out a personalized guide to the particular works in which they have shown interest. They can follow this guide to enter the rooms of the physical museum itself, and confront the original works

(Please turn to *CyberMuse*, page 58)



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# WOMEN IN MUSEUMS

A  
Progress  
Report

Women have played an important role in American museums since the beginning of the century. Early on, they helped establish many of the institutions that have become a part of the national fabric. They often worked in museum education departments and, a bit later, in registrarial offices. Far more often than not, however, it was men who held the positions of curator and director. Then came the women's movement of the 1960s and '70s, and with it, a flood of women into the workplace and graduate school. Women finally began vying for museum jobs traditionally held by men.

Today, women are visible throughout the museum workplace—in upper-level management positions, curating exhibits, overseeing development and fund raising. Yet, a quick glance at *The Official Museum Directory* reveals that the leadership of the largest, best-known museums in this country is still predominantly male. Over recent decades, what has been accomplished and what challenges remain? To answer such questions, *Museum News* turned to five women museum professionals who hold senior positions in the field. They shared their thoughts with us and with each other during a roundtable discussion this January.

Participants included Gail Becker, executive director, Louisville Science Center, Louisville, Ky.; Kinshasha Holman Conwill, director, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Barbara Franco, executive director, The Historical Society of Washington D.C.; Diane Frankel, director, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Washington, D.C.; and Kathy Dwyer Southern, executive director, Port Discovery: The Children's Museum in Baltimore.

—*Susannah Cassedy O'Donnell*,  
*Managing Editor, Museum News*

**MUSEUM NEWS:** Let's begin by looking back to the early days when you started your careers. What were conditions like for women? What sorts of opportunities did you seek, and what obstacles stood in your way?

**DIANE FRANKEL:** I got a brochure about the graduate program at George Washington University when we were living in Botswana; my husband was Peace Corps director. He brought the brochure home, saying, Diane, I think you'd really be interested in this. And I was, so I applied. The curious thing for us was that I was going to go to graduate school in Washington, but the chances were that Chuck was going to take our kids back to San Francisco. The only reason that became a real possibility was because women in Africa did this all the time, and it was a model that we could understand because we'd lived there. When I did start graduate school, I got phone calls from a lot of my women friends who asked if we were getting divorced. I said that I didn't think so; what did they know? But the fact that my husband was supportive, and became a house husband for that first year, really allowed me to go to graduate school. And then I went back to San Francisco, and went on to do an internship. It was an interesting lesson about marriage and career, and how important it was to have the support of the person with whom you were living.

**KATHY DWYER SOUTHERN:** I went to the University of Wisconsin Business School as an undergraduate, and was the guinea pig for the arts administration program when it was being formed. I was a marketing major, and—this was the late '60s—undergraduate classes were very large lectures, you know, 120 people and two women. It had one benefit, which was that professors always knew you if there were only two girls in the class. On the other hand, I remember quite distinctly, as I began interviewing for positions in marketing with mid-west firms, being asked if I could make coffee. And I really was quite surprised about that. I really thought we were at a different point in time.

**MUSEUM NEWS:** And what did you say?

**SOUTHERN:** I said I didn't know how to make coffee, because I didn't. And it was in fact what led me out of business and into a life in the nonprofit area. I thought, I don't know how to make coffee and I am a lousy cook, so I am never going to succeed in the business world if those are really the criteria. And second, what an appalling question to be asked in a seri-

ous way. I really made a choice at a critical point. I could probably be a CEO of major corporation now and rich, and instead here I am in the museum world!

**GAIL BECKER:** Getting out of college in the mid-'60s, museum director wasn't even a career a young woman would consider. I mean, director was a male word and assistant was a female word. You'd be given tests or asked, What do you want to be? A teacher or a nurse? Those were the stereotypical female professions. It was really the women's movement in the '70s that changed a lot of attitudes. That's why there's a big change in all professions, with more women in higher management positions, because women began to strive for them and men began to open up and say, Well, why not?

**BARBARA FRANCO:** I always like to hear how people got into the museum field, because they usually took very circuitous routes. I'm probably one of the few people in the

“What's fairly disappointing is that the structures have not really changed as they should have, particularly given all the struggle that has gone before.”

—Kinshasha Holman Conwill



museum field who went directly into museum work from college. And it really was because of an off-hand remark. I was a history major, a junior or senior at a women's college, and my roommate was from Wilmington, Del. She came back from a vacation and told me that her mother said, Give this stuff about Winterthur to Barbara. It sounds like something she'd be interested in. And that made me see that museums were a path, which was simply nothing that anyone in an academic history program would have ever suggested. And I have to say that, going to a women's college, when I went to my professors and said, You know, here are these graduate programs at Winterthur, they didn't say, Why would you want to do that? or Don't you want to get a Ph.D. and be an academic; that's where

the power is. They really were very supportive and said, Well, that sounds interesting. I'm not sure that other professors would have been as supportive.

In 1966, when I started working in museums, being a curator was a position of power and authority and real prestige in the field. This was something to aspire to, this was something that you wanted to do. So being a director didn't really have all that much appeal. I think that in many ways it's an indication of how much the field has changed.

**KINSHASHA HOLMAN CONWILL:** It's interesting the amount of serendipity in these stories, because for me it was not dissimilar. I was a trained artist, and I had no intention ever to work in a museum, and I didn't see museums as attractive places to work. I saw them as attractive places to visit—I loved going to museums. But an artist friend called me up and told me about this historic house in Los Angeles and made it sound wonderful. And, of course, it was very different from what he had described. But I went to the Frank Lloyd Wright Hollyhock House and I worked there, and it was very unstruc-

routes, we all got professional training. I mean, none of us thought we'll walk in the door as the "X" and then move up. Each of us, at some point, went to graduate school.

**FRANCO:** I think that's a difference between women and men. If you looked at the resumes of men and women directors, you would probably find that the women directors had done more of this specialized training.

**MUSEUM NEWS:** When you got your first job in the museum field, what did you see around you? Where were the women and where were the men? Who had the management positions and who had the lower-level positions? And where did you feel that you could go?

**SOUTHERN:** My first job was in county government, in the cultural subsection of a recreation department. And it was low-level, as first jobs are. Because this was county government, the management structure, even in the '70s, had a very nice balance of men and women. But the department heads were all male, except for maybe personnel, which is also kind of a women's

area. But my mother was a biochemist. And so, for me, she was the model, and it never occurred to me that I couldn't go anywhere. Diane and I were saying earlier, I've always assumed I'm going to be queen one day and I just keep going!

So, even though clearly there was chauvinism and clearly there was a two-track system, I never felt particularly stymied by it. You just figured out ways around it, over it, under it, through it, or left. If you come up against institutional structures that stop you from moving into the areas that you really care about, I have always been one to say, O.K., I've really tried this, but I need more and I'm willing to give more.

**FRANCO:** It's not always about hierarchy and where men and women are. Early on, having a woman as a director really didn't necessarily

make your life any different or easier, because people were playing old games. I mean, the game was there. It really relates more to institutional and gender issues within an institution, and they're often combined with age. When I was a young curator and doing exhibitions, I had to order around and direct the maintenance and preparations staff, who were men old enough to be my father.

**MUSEUM NEWS:** And how did they react?

**FRANCO:** Well, one had to learn how to do that, and not be confrontational or order them around, but still be yourself. Get their respect, but still acknowledge that there were gender and age issues.



**"As a director of a children's museum, what I'm after is creating a setting where people, both men and women, know that they have options."**

—Kathy Dwyer Southern

tured and very difficult. I was very young and I didn't quite know what I was doing. But I eventually found that I liked it.

And then, in terms of serendipity, a guest at a reception told me about this program in arts management at UCLA, and said to me, just like people said to all of you, You should call there; you should do something. And I saw an article about it in the *Los Angeles Times*, and it sounded as romanticized and idealized as this other job had sounded. It sounded like the perfect way to marry an interest in the arts with some kind of management. So, I went into a business school where artists are very low on the totem pole.

**FRANKEL:** I think it's interesting that regardless of the fact that we got in through various circuitous and serendipitous

CONWILL: When I first was at the Frank Lloyd Wright house, it was under the aegis of three different city agencies—cultural affairs, parks and recreation, and building and grounds, or something. And so the carpenter was under one agency, the gardener was under another agency. And I was not only a woman and young, but I was a fairly low-ranking person. Yet I still had to get stuff done. It was that same kind of negotiation. While I was this great feminist and all, I was trying to think of new models. How to work with someone and not just boss these guys around. Talk about old enough to be your father; how about old enough to be your grandfather?

SOUTHERN: In my first 10 years of work, I adopted the “white male” model. I emulated it. I used being a woman when I needed to; I hate to admit this, but here it is. But otherwise, I had the type A, classic hierarchical, authoritarian style. I took what I learned in business school and said, O.K., I am going to put on the suit and I’m going to do it. It took me years to let go of that, to get out of that, to get free of it. I didn’t feel terribly compromised by it, either—what you just said about being yourself. But it did not represent me in a more intimate sense.

CONWILL: Well, the older I got, the more I got like you were. And now I’m trying to get over all of it. But when I was younger, I didn’t have a model of the authoritarian guy. Being an arts person was a little bit different. Things weren’t quite as hierarchical, and there was more fluidity. And the bottom line was that the head of the place was the head of the place. The more I moved up in the field, the more hierarchical I got and the more I put on the suit and whatever. And now, I’ve been taking off the suit and am becoming more relaxed and being more myself, and trying to incorporate those two people instead of being a split personality.

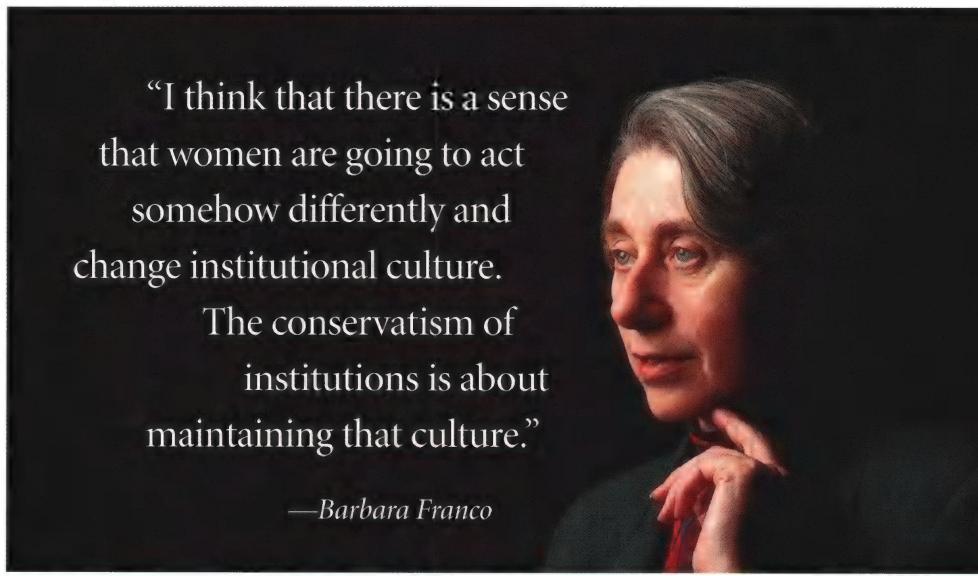
FRANCO: One thing you said that certainly rings true for me is that you had to learn to do things by negotiation. I can tell you that that is a piece of experience that I bring forward. It wasn’t about getting things done by directing people; I didn’t have the power and authority to do that. It was really getting things done through other ways, and getting people to want to do it, which in some ways has served me a whole lot better.

FRANKEL: But I want to ask you, Kinshasha. I mean, you said that you took on this hierarchical model. How did you begin to divest yourself of that?

CONWILL: Years of counseling, darling! . . . I think there are a couple of reasons why I took it on, and it’s very interesting. Part of it has to do with how you are perceived. When I was younger and I negotiated, I think the men thought, This sweet little girl wants us to fix the lights; let’s fix them. I’d gotten to the point where I’d have a work order to do one thing: fix a light bulb. And I’d say, You’re here. Want a cup of coffee? Could you fix the other light? I had these guys doing stuff that probably could have gotten them fired.

“I think that there is a sense that women are going to act somehow differently and change institutional culture. The conservatism of institutions is about maintaining that culture.”

—Barbara Franco



But the more I moved up in the world, and the more authority I gained, the more my authority was challenged. I couldn’t wear jeans and a sweatshirt and then have someone say, Oh, she’s the deputy director of the Studio Museum. Let’s really respect her. So I put on the suit. You know, in the ’80s in New York, [all the women] had that horrible tie and that horrible little suit. But even wearing that suit, a construction foreman could look at me, an intern who is 5 years old, and some other assortment of people—all male, except for me. The construction man would go up to any one of them before he came up to me, because he just could not believe I was in charge, even though I had on the uniform. So it was the weird circumstance that the more authority I had, the more it was questioned and the more I felt I had to assert myself. Now I am this integrated person and it is no longer a problem.

SOUTHERN: Oh, good, good! So we can look to you!

CONWILL: Right, I’ll be your mentor, sugar!

SOUTHERN: Fabulous, I was waiting for you to say that!

CONWILL: I think there’s another aspect, which is race. And the interesting thing is, you really cannot change your race. So

when you walk into a room and you're the only woman, that's maybe weird enough. But when you walk into a room and you're the only black person *and* the only woman, then that stops you. And you think, O.K., my choice now is to fake everything, fake my gender and my race. Or just say, Forget it, and say, These folks are going to have to deal with me. One of the places where that started happening for me was on the board of AAM. Often, the age thing was still there, I was still the youngest person and one of the few women, but there were other women. But I was almost always the only black person or person of color. So I thought, Well, I can sit here with my hands folded and pretend I'm another white guy, or I can bring up the issues and, beyond the issues, I can bring up myself and be myself.



**"I think younger women have a much better sense of themselves than we all did. We've set a pace, though we didn't know we were doing it."**

—Diane Frankel

FRANCO: This actually has been something that has been very important to me through my whole career. I have refused to be someone else. And it's probably the reason that I didn't get to be a director or didn't choose to be a director until I was in my 50s. I keep laughing to myself and think I haven't changed, but the whole management thing has changed. They're writing the books differently now.

BECKER: I know that when I started out I didn't even consider museum director as a profession. I'm wondering when each of you realized that was something you wanted and were going to go for it.

FRANKEL: When I was interviewed for the job as the director of museum studies [at John F. Kennedy University, Orinda, Calif.], it was a pretty integrated group interviewing me. But when I got the job, one man said, The reason I thought you would be so good is that when you were asked why you wanted this job, you said, I want to be in charge of something. At that

point, I knew that I wanted to be in charge of something, that it was important on some level for me.

BECKER: How old were you at that time?

FRANKEL: I was probably around 36 or 37.

BECKER: It was the same with me, mid-30s.

SOUTHERN: I ran something teensy, but I was ready. I ran an arts council in Richmond, Va., and it had a \$50,000-a-year operating budget and a staff of three.

BECKER: But you were in charge?

SOUTHERN: I was the director.

BECKER: Approximately how old were you at that point?

SOUTHERN: I was in my late 20s, 29, 30, something like that. But we should be clear about this. It was three people, and the two other people were named Puffy and Ollie. I felt like I was running a puppet show. So it was being in charge, but let's be clear about the scale of this.

BECKER: I was in my mid-30s. I suddenly had this opportunity open up and I said, Yeah, I want to be in charge; I enjoy it. And my personality changed, too.

FRANKEL: In what way?

BECKER: I became more assertive, more self-confident. I had always thought of myself as being somewhat inhibited and shy, and I realized that I very consciously did change. I'm still me, but in the way I work with people, I just definitely became much more assertive.

MUSEUM NEWS: At this point, all of you are heads of major institutions.

SOUTHERN: Well. . . .

MUSEUM NEWS: Well, you're not directing \$50,000-budget arts councils. You're not directing Puffy and Ollie anymore.

SOUTHERN: Puffy and Ollie were wonderful women; they just had bad names.

MUSEUM NEWS: You've all achieved a certain professional level, and you've also all achieved a certain comfort level. You no longer feel that you have to put on the horrible blue business suit with the little tie. There's no longer a sense that you

must maintain a certain demeanor, that you have to act "like a man." How did you get to this point, and what do you see around you now? What do you notice about other women with whom you work?

**CONWILL:** I think that there's a lot of fluidity in things. I've been interested in a number of women who were directors who have just opted out completely. What's the next step? Well, for some of them, it was opting out.

**FRANKEL:** Opted out to do what?

**CONWILL:** Well, many people really are doing nothing, which looks so inviting! People are allowing themselves time to figure out what they're going to do. I look at some of these people with great admiration, because it takes a lot of courage to step out of the rat race. These are people who are highly prized in the field, and one of the hardest things when you're so-called successful is to turn off the noise of people telling you what you should now do. And particularly if you're a woman, because if you don't stay in the field, you're letting down all of womankind. There was an art museum person who stepped away, and I told her, I think you're fabulous, you're brave, you're courageous, you're wonderful. And she said, I'm so glad you said so, because a lot of people seem really mad at me. There were a lot of other women who seemed to think, If I'm still in the rat race, how dare you leave? And how dare uncertainty be part of the choice? So I think there's a lot of unwritten script here.

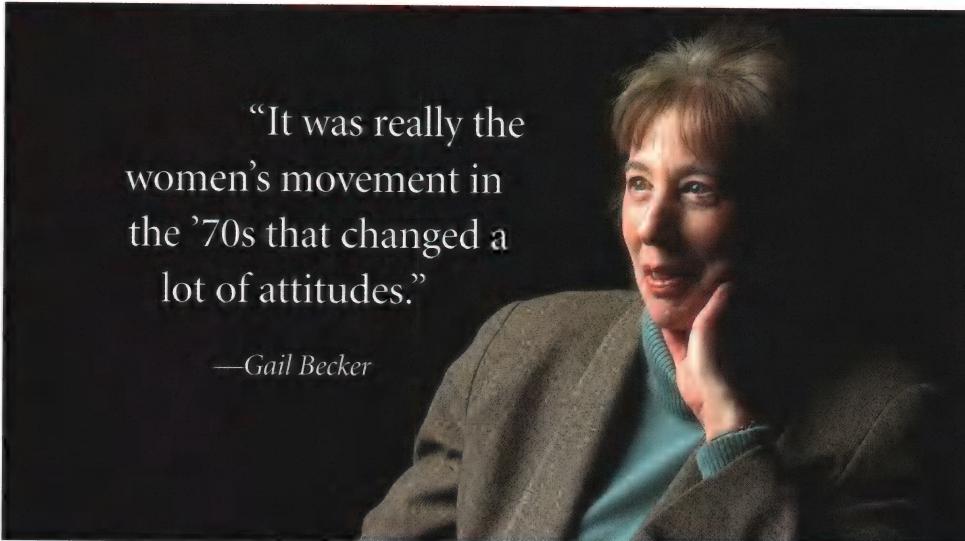
**FRANKEL:** I was very traditional in the sense that I got married, had my kids, and then my career. A lot of these younger women—well, now they're probably in their 40s—they're having their children, but they also want to live through their kids' first six years gently and quietly and give themselves time to enjoy it. So they'll have their career, then they'll opt out for a few years, and then they'll probably go back.

**SOUTHERN:** As a director of a children's museum where the corporate culture isn't really set because there's only eight of us on staff, what I'm really after is creating a setting where you can have the kids, where career continues or doesn't continue, where the people who are inside, both men and women, know that they have options. The great point that we are at is that, especially if you run the places, you can create settings for all those options.

**FRANKEL:** But we set those tones. At the children's museum [Bay Area Discovery Museum, Sausalito, Calif.] I directed, I brought my dog to work. And people said, Why do you bring the dog? I said because it humanizes the place, which it did in some funny ways. But then I'd have these staff people who would get pregnant, as young women and middle-aged women tend to do, and they'd say, Well, how do you feel about this? And I'd say, How do I feel about *what*? And they'd say, We're going to have these kids, and we're going to go on leave. And in fact, some of the people even brought the kids into the museum. But I encouraged that. So long as it wasn't a problem in the unit, it was fine. And they said, Diane, no man would have ever let us do this.

**MUSEUM NEWS:** But what if it's not a children's museum? How do museums compare to other workplaces when it comes to balancing family and career?

**BECKER:** I think that it's a much better environment for the females on the staff, and I do have a predominantly female staff. A number of them, particularly the females, like the flexi-



"It was really the women's movement in the '70s that changed a lot of attitudes."

—Gail Becker

bility. We say, If there is a childcare problem, O.K., you can leave during the day. A couple of women who are very skilled and could compete in the profit world for much higher paying jobs would go off to an interview every so often, and would come back and say, I couldn't fit in there, it's too structured, I really am much more comfortable here at this point in my life. And in most cases they have said that they think it's because they have a female boss.

**FRANCO:** I think it's also institutional. I had my second child in the middle of my career. I had a director above me, but I also was supervising staff. One of the really interesting things

was the kind of support that I got from staff. It gave me enough courage and self-confidence to work around things in ways that my boss, who was a man and who was not particularly comfortable talking about the "P" word—pregnancy.

But anyway, it really is about an environment; how comfortable you are. My children are 14 years apart. When my first child was born I was at a very different time in my career. I was very apologetic, I never talked about children at work—that was something that I needed to keep completely separate. When my daughter was born, I was much more comfortable about who I was and my role, and therefore much more able to integrate that into my work. My attitude was that work had to treat the baby like a rival sibling, because we were doing that at home. Work was like another person who was taking my time, and I had to share that and figure out a way to make that happen. So I wasn't feeling guilty or apologetic about it.

FRANKEL: I think it has a lot to do with attitude, whether it's corporate or museum work. Museum work is hard work. You work very, very long hours. If you work in a corporation and your boss says family and career are important things and you have to balance them, then that's the attitude that permeates the corporation. I think it's an attitude that I've seen much more prevalent in museums, where people are much more forgiving—O.K., if you leave at 4:00 on Tuesday, you'll come in at 7:30 in the morning on Thursday.

CONWILL: I think, though, that the heads of the biggest museums are guys. While I think great strides have been made in civil rights, the horrible statistics still prevail. Important social movements—civil rights, feminism, all that—have surely made an impact and surely have changed how people perceive and interact in the world.

Yet, unfortunately, the larger structures don't look as different as they might. Once I did get into the art museum field, I thought, of all the museums, these should be the ones, the most flexible, the most fun, the most open. And they were the opposite, because they were the most tied to the power structure and to hierarchy, and actually to some of the most precious cultural values, and those had to be protected. The guardians of those values were the guardians of whatever is the most important in society, usually white men. All of us have changed individually. New generations are beneficiaries, as we were, of the work of previous generations.

But what's still fairly disappointing on the verge of the 21st century is that the structures, whether in the museum field or the rest of society, have not really changed as they really should have, particularly given all the struggle that has gone before. For society as a whole and for the museum field, until that really changes, I don't think we can declare victory.

BECKER: I think the critical factor is the board of trustees. It's the board of trustees that hires the director. It depends on the board's composition, and if the trustees are from a corporate background and are all white males, they are not going to feel comfortable with a female museum director—in many cases. I think things are changing because the age of boards of trustees is getting lower and that generation is changing. I know of a board that's in the process of hiring a new director, and is interviewing at least three candidates, both male and female. And I know that the board chairman is from the old school. He's a very, very chauvinistic man; it's just the way he is, he comes from the corporate world. And I'm willing to bet that he's not going to be comfortable with a female director in that museum.

CONWILL: I sometimes feel, and not to your comment, Gail, particularly, but that people in the field hide behind boards. I've had colleagues in the museum field tell me that they couldn't do something progressive like hire a woman or a person of color because of their board, and I think it's baloney. I think it's because they themselves, no matter what age they are, want to be like the old school. That is their model of success. They can be women, they can be men, they can be 40, and still the model for them is a very competitive, hierarchical field. *ArtNews* just published a list of the 50 most important people in the art world. One person of color and five women. It was pathetic. But that is the reality. Power is still vested where it's vested. And that list wasn't made up by a board of directors.

FRANKEL: But let me ask you a question. And this isn't talking about younger women, this is really talking about women of our age. . . .

CONWILL: We're not young?

FRANKEL: Well, we're adorable! . . . I think the other side of it is, a lot of us are looking at whether we want to work in those situations. There's a dearth of leadership in this field. While the boards, I agree with you, often are changing, I think a lot of women are saying that they are unwilling to work in that kind of environment, and that the environment has to change. And if they're courageous, they're talking to boards of directors about it. The expectations are we want certain things out of this relationship as well. Twenty years ago, we wouldn't have known it. But I think younger women have a much better sense of themselves than we all did. Because they've grown up in an environment where we've set a pace, though we didn't know we were doing it. And even though we don't know if we're suc-

cessful or not, they perceive us as being successful. And there's this sense of, Kinshasha Conwill, God, do you know her, can I talk to her?

CONWILL: That's how we know they're out of touch! . . . But that is interesting, the concept of how your success is the mirror. I had mentors who were artists, I had mentors who were peers, I didn't have the kind of traditional mentors. It's interesting when people tell you that you're their mentor. You say, wait a minute here, I don't know if I want that. . . .

MUSEUM NEWS: Do you feel that you have acted as a mentor to younger women?

CONWILL: Yes, whether you like it or not. People adopt you as mentors, and then you feel a little self-conscious. But, actually, it's really gratifying, it's really wonderful. A young woman came up to me on a panel and said, I've always wanted to be in a room with you. And I thought, Dear, raise those expectations just a *little* bit! But I'm glad that younger women feel they have someone to look to, because I don't feel that a lot of us who are in our 40s and older had those kind of mentors.

MUSEUM NEWS: Are you a mentor in the traditional way, taking, for example, a young intern under your wing? Or is it more informal?

CONWILL: I think it's a little of both. Our museum has had a preponderance of females, and so there have been staff members over the years whom I didn't consciously mentor, but I really was invested in their success and in their development. Since they have left, they have said to me, It was really important. I've kept a relationship with them, I've given references for their jobs. And then, everyone gets a call: Can I just talk to you for 15 minutes and can you tell me what your career was like? A few times a year I spend some time with one of these people. It's hilarious. First of all, they think that you had this perfectly planned, so I disabuse them of that right away, and they're totally stunned. And then you encourage them. The interesting thing is some young women may have a better view than we did, but I think all young people are just as confused ultimately. Their confusion just looks a little different.

SOUTHERN: But the expectation of what's available is different, particularly for younger women entering careers, from what was true 20 years ago.

CONWILL: How are we to respond to that? Because I think in some ways that's overly optimistic. You look at the fact that there truly still is a glass ceiling in museums. But you don't want to say to someone, No, you'll never be the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That would be a horrible thing to say. But you also don't want someone to think that because

of laws and progress and all of that, it is wide open. I'm very encouraging, but what I try to do is convey that it is hard.

SOUTHERN: I don't think that it's bad to have high expectations, because you know what? We can depend upon the world to create the cold bath of reality. What is really hard to hang onto throughout life is a sense of optimism, a sense of your own will, and then maybe get some courage to go do it, whatever it is.

MUSEUM NEWS: Aside from their roles as mentors to younger women, how can women in museums help one another?

FRANKEL: One of the things that I have found very interesting is that women who are in leadership positions are often, in many cases, very supportive of each other. That is a part of the museum field that I find wonderful. I think there is a generosity to each other. I go out of my way to recommend other women to key positions because I know how competent they are. I've worked with them, I know how great they are, and what a good job they're going to do. And so I feel very strongly that, given the chance, I will say, This woman is incredible, you've really got to look at her.

CONWILL: I think that it does come down to individuals, ultimately. I've found many women colleagues who are very supportive. But women sometimes don't like each other, can't stand each other, and others completely follow the model—they're more guys than guys are. Some of the people who have been the most helpful to me in the museum field have been men. The challenge is to all of us, and it shouldn't be that women bring in women, or black people bring in black people.

SOUTHERN: What keeps more women from being directors? What are people afraid of? Or is there a sense that we're not as competent? We could all go get *Aviso* and look at all the jobs that are open for directors, and I think that in many instances those jobs will still go to men. We know that there are competent women in the field, but we're still not seeing them hired.

FRANCO: I think one of the reasons is the sense of responsibility. I think a lot of organizations don't know how a woman is going to act, or if a woman is going to take more of a stand and start asking some of the questions and raising some of the issues they don't want to deal with. I think that there is a sense that women are going to act somehow differently and change institutional culture. The conservatism of institutions is about maintaining that culture. They don't know what that's going to mean. It's not about good or bad or ability. I think it's the fear of the change and what that might bring. M

# Blue Crabs & Biotechnology

Baltimore's Museum-based Revival

By Jane Lusaka

On Feb. 7, 1904, a cold Sunday morning, fire alarms rang throughout downtown Baltimore. Horse-drawn fire engines raced to the Hurst Building, the site of the blaze. But the wind, blowing at speeds of 20 to 30 miles per hour, was too strong. Firefighters could not combat the flames, which quickly spread from street to street. The next morning, with the fire still raging, men and equipment were recruited from Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania to help extinguish the fire. But they were too late. By Monday evening, Baltimore's entire business district—approximately 1,500 buildings, including several historic structures—had been destroyed.

Despite the widespread destruction, some of Baltimore's leading citizens considered the fire less than catastrophic. After all, they said, not a single life was lost. And many people were glad to see the end of the empty buildings and dilapidated warehouses in the downtown area. The city now had the chance to construct new streets and structures, to turn Baltimore into a modern 20th-century metropolis. Only a few days after the fire, the rebuilding of Baltimore began.

Less than 100 years later, the city is experiencing a different kind of renaissance. This time, the cause is not a fire, but a change in outlook. The plan is not for a new business district, but a revitalized infrastructure. But the goal is the same: to prepare Baltimore for the world of the future—this time, the technological marketplace of the 21st century. And museums are considered important partners in the effort. "Museums have played an important role in the past and we're hoping that they play an increasingly important role in the future," says Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke. "They enrich the

quality of life, they provide jobs, they are really an economic engine. There are several thousand jobs in this city and state associated with museums. And we intend to encourage the development of more."

One aspect of this role is the promotion of tourism, Baltimore's second largest industry after health care. Baltimore knows what other cities have learned: increased tourism means increased revenue. City leaders also believe that Baltimore's new museums can help the city compete in the global marketplace—by providing additional venues for training and education and by teaching its children how to survive in today's fast-paced society. Museums, they say, can help Baltimore become a national biotechnology center comparable to California's Silicon Valley.

Thus, at a time when many city governments are reducing funding for the arts, Schmoke's administration is actively promoting museum development. New museums are being built all over town. The Columbus Center, a marine biotechnology research and exhibition center, has been opening in stages since the spring of 1995. The American Visionary Art Museum opened in November 1995, and the National Museum of Dentistry and the Baltimore City Life Museums' Morton K. Blaustein City Life Exhibition Center opened last year. The President Street Railway Station has been converted into the Baltimore Civil War Museum; it opens in April. In 1998, the Babe Ruth Museum and Baseball Center will relocate to a new \$10-million facility near the Camden Yards baseball park. Port Discovery, a children's museum with Disney-designed exhibits, also is scheduled to open next year. And institutions devoted to jazz, urban geography, and African-American history are planned for the future. "We looked at some of the strengths of our community and it was very clear that we should build on those strengths in order to continue the renaissance of our city into the future," says Schmoke.

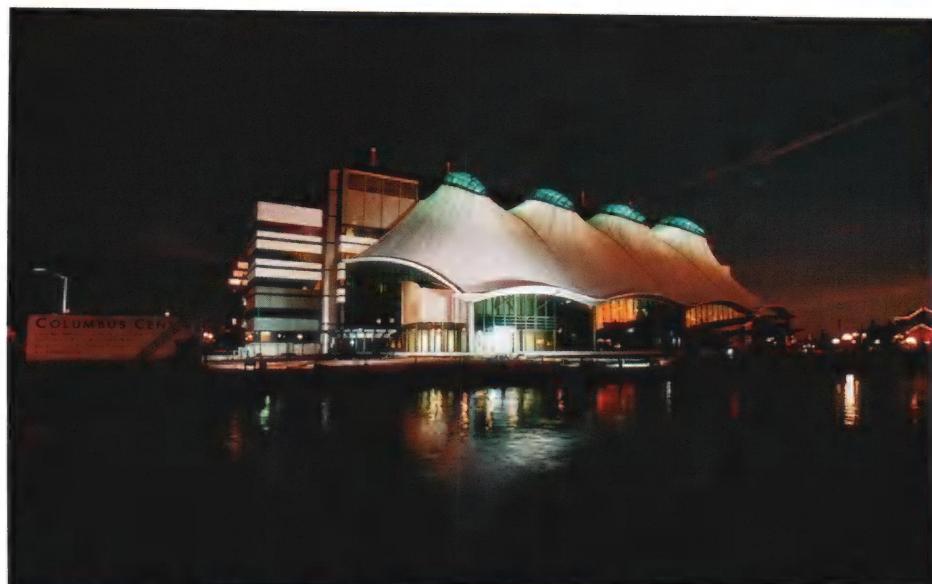
## The Plan

Situated in a natural harbor on the Chesapeake Bay, near a number of swift-flowing streams, Baltimore's early history was tied to the water. In colonial times, Maryland farmers found the location a convenient spot to market their crops to European merchants. Baltimore was incorporated as a city in 1797 (a year-long, city-wide celebration marking the bicentennial began in January 1997). In the 19th century, the city became one of America's busiest seafaring and trading communities. By the beginning of World War II, Baltimore

was a major industrial center, but in the 1950s and '60s, manufacturing companies and middle-class residents moved to the spacious and more profitable suburbs. The city's economy began to fall, as did the quality of its services.

To survive, Baltimore turned once again to the water. An urban renewal project targeting the downtown waterfront area began in 1959 at the initiative of the private sector. Completed in 1980 by the Rouse Company, the renovation of the Inner Harbor has been such a success that other cities have used it as a model. More important, it revitalized an economy that had been declining since the '60s. The Inner Harbor now attracts between 5 and 8 million people annually, catering to the visiting business executive or tourist, with hotels, restaurants, shops, sports attractions, and several museums in close proximity, and bringing much-desired dollars to the city. At the center of the harbor's revival is the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), whose mission is to "bring the city's resources together to facilitate business development." As Barbara Bonnell, BDC's director of information, explains, "We must add new attractions or people don't come back. Our goal is to do one or two a year." Baltimore is now as famous for its waterfront as for its Orioles baseball team, blue crabs, and row houses with white marble steps.

"Generally, we've been able to provide ways of supporting museums even at a time that we've had to shrink other parts of government," says Schmoke. "Either by providing capital assistance, or some infrastructure help, or direct funding of an annual appropriation." Many of Baltimore's older institutions are evidence of the city's long-standing tradition of museum support. The National Aquarium was built with private and city funds, as was the Baltimore Museum of Art's modern art wing, which opened in 1994. Two years ago, the city sold a for-



Known for its blue crabs (opposite), Baltimore hopes that museum projects such as the Columbus Center (above) will help the city become a national biotechnology center.



mer Greyhound bus garage to the Maryland Historical Society for \$1; the station's conversion into an exhibition center is scheduled to be completed in October. And there are plans to move the Baltimore Streetcar Museum closer to the B&O Railroad Museum. The two transportation museums may be joined by the Fire Museum of Maryland, which has a collection of 50 fire trucks dating to 1806. Nothing is set in stone; Fire Museum Executive Director Richard W. Flint also is looking at other sites in Baltimore County. But according to Flint, who is working with the BDC, the three museums might share facilities, cooperate on marketing plans, and collaborate on exhibitions and programs.

City leaders realized that tourism was not the only area where museums could affect the city's economic development. In 1991, a task force appointed by the Greater Baltimore Committee determined that Baltimore's strengths lay in "an international growth area—the medical and biological research industry—the life sciences." The task force's report stated that the city's marine science and technology base was "Baltimore's best chance for high skill and high wage jobs for all citizens." As the mayor puts it: "We could tell that we were going to change from a city that was dependent on manufacturing to one that was dependent on services. And that the emphasis on life sciences was going to help us have a diverse and vibrant economy for the next century."

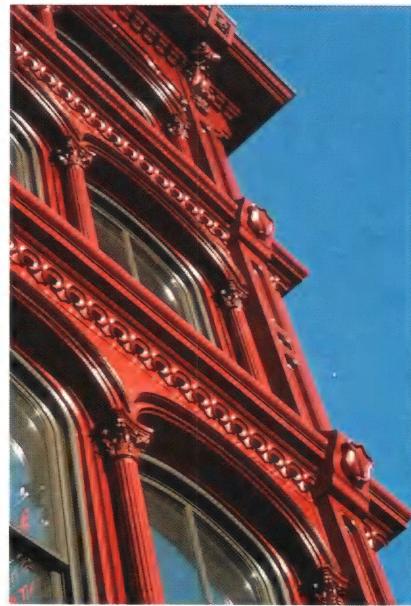
The city designed a long-range action plan that would enlist all segments of the city's corporate and nonprofit sector in its economic strategy. Museums were viewed as important partners in the plan. As vital community and educational institutions, they could help prepare Baltimore's young people for the technologically based work force of the 21st century. Two new museum projects most clearly reflect this vision for the future: The Columbus Center and Port Discovery.

## Science Is for Everyone

An early partner in the life sciences project was the Baltimore City Life Museums (BCLM). "When the Greater Baltimore Committee launched its initiative to focus attention on the potential of science and technology as an economic engine for the region," says former BCLM Executive Director John Durel, "we did an exhibit that targeted African-American middle-school and high-school students and challenged them to think about science and technology in their careers." Instead of looking at the history of science and technology, it examined past, present, and future job opportunities for black people in Baltimore, including the "kind of obstacles [that] have traditionally stood in the way of African Americans getting jobs." Called "Heroes Just Like You," the exhibit ran for three years, closing in 1994.

The Maryland Science Center and the National Aquarium also have long-standing outreach programs designed to introduce young people to careers in science. But the cornerstone of the life sciences strategy is the new \$160-million Columbus Center, the marine science research and exhibition complex named for the Italian explorer who landed on American shores in 1492. Its stated mission is to educate and entertain visitors with information about marine biotechnology, to ensure America's leadership in scientific research and development, and to train the work force of the future.

The center was conceptualized about 10 years ago, around the time of the planning for the Columbus Quincentenary celebrations. A group of business and community leaders developed a plan for a marine research center that could combine exhibition, education, and science in an innovative way. High attendance figures at long-established institutions such as the Maryland Science Center (founded 1979), National Aquarium (opened 1981), and Harborplace, the Rouse Company's com-



Opposite page: "Nipper's Neighborhood" (left), featuring a kid-sized fire truck, is on view at the Morton K. Blaustein City Life Exhibition Center (right).

This page: Baltimore's renovated Inner Harbor (left); the 125-year-old cast-iron facade of the Morton K. Blaustein City Life Exhibition Center (right), salvaged from a demolished harbor building.

plex of stores and restaurants, convinced them that a location at the Inner Harbor would be ideal. They managed to grab the last available spot at the water's edge. "The Inner Harbor is an extraordinary example of public planning," says Stan Heuisler, president and CEO of the Columbus Center. "We're the last elephant in the parade."

Eager to support a project that could put Baltimore at the forefront of marine biology research, the city designated more than \$70 million towards the Columbus Center; the remaining monies came from federal, state, and private sources. More than \$34 million, nearly half of the city's allocation, reflects the value of the site itself, which has been leased to the center for 99 years at an annual rent of \$1. Heuisler praises the positive support from the city and the private sector. "That's what makes Baltimore very unusual," he says. "When things have to get done, there's a tradition. People don't say, 'We can't do it.'" But other aspects of the capital campaign were not as successful. Plans for a division devoted to marine archaeology were abandoned after the state of Maryland refused to allocate any additional funds. And the federal government allocated \$7.6 million less than was originally promised, which delayed construction of the exhibition hall. The shortfall was offset with additional donations from Baltimore's corporate sector as well as a city-sponsored loan.

Critics have warned that the center will become an enormous fiscal liability, but Baltimore's mayor disagrees. "The Columbus Center is one good example of a really unprecedented relationship between a life sciences research institution and the general public," says Schmoke. "It pulls together the public and the private sectors. It is a good example of an investment paying off." To ensure that the city would reap benefits from the project, the center's founders sought input from the local community from the earliest stages. "When one has been given

as much public money as we have, there's a responsibility," says Heuisler, who was born and raised in Baltimore. An affirmative action plan awarded \$25 million in contracts to minority-owned businesses and more than \$90 million to city-owned businesses. And community representatives were actively involved in the design of the building, exhibits, and educational programs such as "Science is for Everyone," which trains volunteers from area churches to teach children about science.

Construction on the 257,000-square-foot building began in October 1992 and was completed by early 1995. The building was designed by the Toronto-based architectural firm of Zeidler Roberts Partnership, and the exhibits by Associates and Ferren, the Academy Award-winning design firm. The five-story structure has a glass and metal exterior and a Teflon-coated fiber-glass fabric roof. Originally the roof was supposed to resemble a sail and its rigging, but the cost was too prohibitive. As such, "the fabric roof assumed a more amorphous shape," says Ed Zeidler, a partner at the architectural firm. "It's more reminiscent of an anemone."

The Columbus Center has three components. The Center of Marine Biotechnology (COMB), originally located at the University of Maryland, opened in the spring of 1995. COMB scientists research ways to use marine flora and fauna to develop medicines and other products. The Science and Technology Center (SciTEC), the education arm, opened in September 1995; and the exhibition space—the Hall of Exploration—is scheduled to open on May 3. By providing visitors with access to all three sectors, the center aims to break down the barriers between the public and science.

"We were concerned about the fact that, more and more, on a daily basis, through fax machines and radio call-in programs, the general public is influencing highly complicated issues of public policy, regarding the environment and genetic

research," says Heuisler. "Yet all the current affairs polls show that people know less and less about the rapidly changing world of science." Heuisler and his staff see the Columbus Center as the solution to that problem. Designer Bran Ferren, now a vice president with Walt Disney Imagineering, envisioned the Hall of Exploration as a working science lab where people can see "real science in progress, not simulation." Visitors will be able to see scientists conduct experiments on how to clean up the marine environment; discover how genetic makeup can affect health and weight; and walk through a giant cell to learn how it functions in the human body.

All exhibits will be linked to a "way-finding" computer network that guides visitors through the exhibits. The center's audience is comprised of two distinct groups: tourists who make single visits, and local residents who visit again and again. Thus, the way-finding system provides various levels of information, helping visitors not only find an exhibit but also to access more information from the World Wide Web. "Our approach is similar to the layers of an onion," says Carol Bossert, vice president for programming and director of the exhibition hall. "People who know a great deal about the subject can make a beeline for the core. Others can slowly peel through layers of information."

Eventually, the Hall of Exploration will be linked via computer to the center's education wing. SciTEC's facilities include a 120-seat auditorium, two laboratories equipped with 32 microscopes donated by Olympus America, and a computer lab with 32 workstations donated by Silicon Graphics. At SciTEC, high school and college students learn how to use the Internet and conduct experiments that relate to research being done by the COMB scientists. "A three-hour experience is not going to change one's life pursuit," says Treopia Washington, director of education/outreach. "But we can plant a seed that says science isn't hard, it's interesting, and it's something you can do. I would hope that a couple of years down the road we will see more students going into science and accessing more information about careers in science. We also want to show students that science is crucial to any career."

"One of the payoffs of working with the community is that you can serve as an agent of intercession in the economic future of lots of young people in our city," says Heuisler. "All the statistics say the future work force will be made up of women and minorities, who are very under-represented in the fields of science and technology. We are offering society more broad-based and eclectic scientific models."

## Tools for Life

Just a short walk from the Columbus Center stands the 90-year-old Fishmarket Building, a historic landmark located on the east side of the Inner Harbor. The 80,000-square-foot building has been vacant for years, its most recent occupant a

nightclub that failed in the 1980s. But city leaders are convinced that the building and the surrounding NationsBank Plaza have great potential. In 1992, the city purchased the Fishmarket Building, determined to create an attraction that both would bring tourists to Baltimore's east side and reach out to residents of the local community. The answer? A museum designed specifically for families, which could provide children with "tools for life"—qualities and skills that help young people become productive adults. Port Discovery: The Children's Museum in Baltimore is scheduled to open in 1998.

The time is right for a children's museum, says Port Discovery Executive Director Kathy Dwyer Southern. The BDC, which encouraged NationsBank and other businesses to move into the area, envisions the plaza as a center for family-related activities and organizations. Providing high-quality entertainment for families—rather than money-making operations like horse racing or casino gambling—was always the city's goal for the Inner Harbor, explains the BDC's Bonnell. "What we're looking to do is continue that [effort] beyond the waterfront area." But expectations for the museum are high. Port Discovery, seen as the main economic catalyst for the area, is projected to attract between 400,000 and 750,000 visitors a year and create nearly 1,000 jobs, 93 of them at the museum. Southern admits to sometimes waking up at 3:00 in the morning, wondering, "Are we on the right track? Is this something we can really pull off?"

Such moments of doubt are rare, however, and the director lists several reasons for the museum's potential success. One is the support the project has received from the city of Baltimore, which is leasing the Fishmarket Building to the museum for 110 years at an annual rent of \$1. Southern has collaborated with the BDC on such issues as parking, clean streets, crime, and all the features that encourage people to visit a given area. These features range from the practical, such as a recently opened nearby subway station, to what Southern calls the "whimsical [and] wonderful," such as creatively designed footpaths. "There hasn't been a door that's been closed to us," she says. "Mayor Schmoke is a mayor who gets museums and understands their value and importance, and we have been lucky to have his good arm wrapped around Port Discovery." Schmoke has allocated \$2 million in city funds to the project and persuaded NationsBank to "help the city" by donating \$3 million more. Says Southern: "Now that's a mayor really working on your behalf." A capital campaign targeting local and national organizations has raised \$13 million for the \$29-million museum, including a \$540,000 donation from Baltimore Gas and Electric. Renovation of the Fishmarket Building is scheduled to begin later this year.

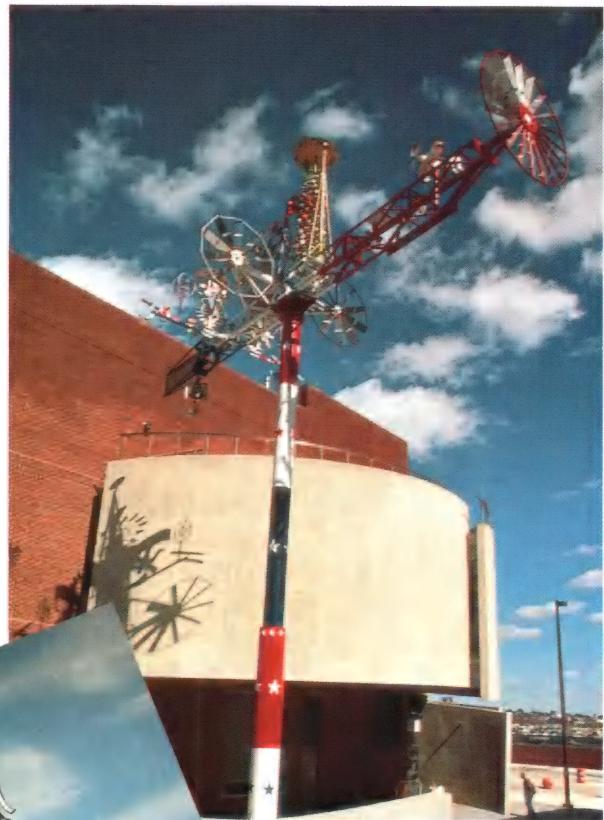
Southern uses a real estate term to describe one reason for Schmoke's support: "location, location, location." People come to the Inner Harbor in large numbers, she says, and a children's

museum in close proximity will provide out-of-state families with yet another reason to return. Port Discovery also will serve as a meeting place for Baltimore's local and suburban children and their parents. According to Southern, the mayor sees the museum as "a place where all these communities can mix and where everyone can benefit."

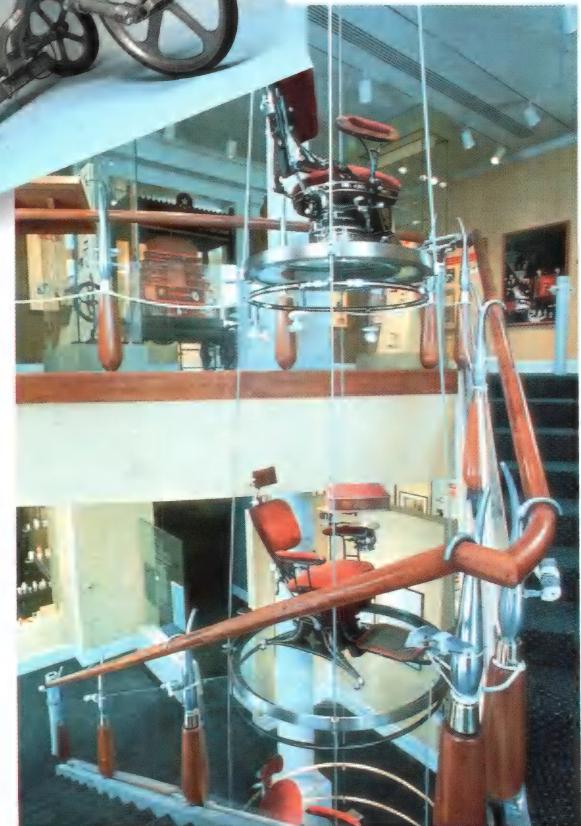
There's yet another reason for the museum's potential success. Port Discovery is the first museum with exhibits designed by Walt Disney Imagineering, the design wing of the theme park giant. It seems an odd collaboration, but Southern assures that visitors will not encounter Mickey Mouse or any other Disney characters within the museum's walls. According to the director, the designers know that Port Discovery is not a theme park, and Disney's role is similar to that of any other design consultant. "Every museum that's ever been built has faced the same set of [questions]," she says. "What does it stand for? How do you display the collection? What's the point of view? We face those same issues. We just happen to have a design team, a Disney design team, that happens to know an awful lot about families and kids."

In fact, the project may be mutually beneficial. A few years ago, Disney attempted to build a history-oriented theme park near the Manassas National Battlefield Park, a Civil War site in Northern Virginia. Disney's America promised a serious but entertaining celebration of such subjects as slavery, immigration, and the Vietnam War. But faced with antagonism both from scholars who criticized Disney's approach to history as romanticized and distorted and preservationists seeking to protect the battlefield, Disney cancelled the project in late 1994. Port Discovery gives Disney staff an opportunity to see how exhibits are produced by museum professionals. "We're learning how kids and families have a good time," says Southern. And, working alongside the Port Discovery staff, the Disney team is "learning more about how kids and families learn in the museum setting."

It is Disney's "fabulous ability to create environments" that ensures that Port Discovery's exhibits will make kids say, "Wow!" says Southern. (One plan calls for young visitors to arrive at the museum via a nearby canal in a submarine. "If there are any *Museum News* readers who want to donate a submarine, we would love it," says the director.) But achieving a balance between entertainment and learning presented the greatest challenge to the museum's education consultants, who include Michael Spock, former director of the Boston Children's Museum, and Elaine Heumann Gurian, former deputy director of the U.S. Holocaust Museum. For the educators, it was important that the museum be *for* children rather than *about* science or history or some other discipline. Thus Port Discovery will help young people learn to navigate the confusing array of social, emotional, and technological issues created by modern society, to help them find their way in the world, says Southern. "All kids have dreams and aspirations, things that they hope to do, hope to



The American Visionary Art Museum (above) displays the work of self-taught artists, such as Jim Bauer's 1995 *Bike God* (left). Below: A tower of dentists' chairs at the Dr. Samuel D. Harris National Museum of Dentistry.



become," she says. "How do we encourage them to dare to dream? And how do [we help them] face the challenges that might stop them from achieving that dream?"

The educators determined that Port Discovery should be a thrilling yet educational adventure. The museum will encourage children to exert themselves physically and use their imaginations; in short, to play and have fun. But exhibits and programs also will provide children with tools for making decisions, solving problems, and collaborating with others—both inside and outside the museum's walls. Similar to the Columbus Center, the museum will have computer-based activities and will teach kids about potential careers—but in all disciplines, not just the life sciences. Visitors also will be guided to other museums and organizations in Baltimore that have additional information about ideas presented at Port Discovery.

For example, a potential recreation of a caving expedition might simulate a real experience, complete with the rumbling and shaking of a cave-in, similar to a theme park attraction. But the museum exhibition would ask its young visitors to plan for a successful trip, to think about what kinds of clothes and equipment they'll need, the best route to take through the cave, and who they might want as a traveling companion. Unlike a theme park, says Southern, Port Discovery will teach young people how to develop critical thinking skills—"tools for life"—and to continue to use those skills long after they've left the museum. And the museum could inform young visitors about a variety of related subjects ranging, in this instance, from cave painting to geology.

Some might argue that parents are better equipped than museums to teach children about "tools for life." But Southern sees a visit to the museum as a joint family experience. Port Discovery will not be "a drop-off site," she says; parents and children will be invited to participate in the museum's activities together. And several potential funders—national corporations

looking ahead 25 or 50 years—have embraced the "tools for life" concept because it encourages children to plan for the future. "I wouldn't want to substitute museums for good parents," says Schmoke. "But I do think that museums can help enrich children's lives and support some of the lessons that parents and schools are trying to teach."

## An Act of Faith

Three other new museums reflect Baltimore's strong sense of civic pride, a sensibility reflected by the city's nicknames. "The city of neighborhoods" refers to the city's 200 discrete communities. And "Charm City," as described by the Baltimore Convention and Visitors Bureau, refers to Baltimoreans' long-standing desire to improve the quality of their lives. As the city continues its transition from an economy based on manufacturing to one based on science, technology, and tourism, Baltimore's citizens expect their museums to portray this sense of tradition and community.

Thus the new Morton K. Blaustein Exhibition Center, the sixth site located on the Baltimore City Life Museums' campus, illustrates Baltimore's 300-year-old history and documents how the city's past has influenced its present and future. Its exhibits are based on a series of focus groups held with community representatives over a three-year period. According to John Durel, the museum "wanted to make sure that the exhibits we produced had some relevance to Baltimore today. Not just exhibits that were intrinsically interesting but that could connect to what was on people's minds today." Comments from the focus groups led to shows such as "What Makes Baltimore Bawlamer?," which refers to the local pronunciation of the city's name and incorporates recognizable icons—the Inner Harbor, the Orioles, blue crabs, and row houses—to explore the city's character. "I Am The City" recounts the story of Baltimore



from the late 18th century to the present. And a community gallery provides space where local groups and individuals can create their own exhibitions.

Baltimore is also proud of its reputation as a "city of American firsts." Here, Alexander Brown founded the first investment banking house in 1800, the first commercial ice cream factory was established in 1851, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad launched the first electric railway locomotive in the world in 1895. The Dr. Samuel D. Harris National Museum of Dentistry is located on the campus of the University of Maryland at Baltimore, site of the world's first dental college (1839). The museum's mission is to educate and entertain visitors about dentists and the dental profession, as well as to promote good oral hygiene. Objects on display include Queen Victoria's dental instruments as well as an engraved silver-plated nasal inhaler, complete with hinged nose clip, which was used by 19th-century dentists to administer anesthesia.

This is also the city where the Ouija board was invented, Edgar Allan Poe lived and died, and avant-garde film director John Waters was born. "Baltimore has always been known as a place of great individuality," says Rebecca Hoffberger, founder and director of the American Visionary Art Museum. She feels that factor made her hometown the perfect setting for the museum, which was established to display and document the work of self-taught artists. "As the first American museum wholly devoted to showcasing works by visionary artists," she says, "this museum aims to explore, champion, and celebrate intuitive invention, fresh thought, and self-reliant individuality." The museum's land and two buildings were donated by the city of Baltimore.

Baltimore's museum directors understand that their role in the city's economic strategy is twofold: to support the local community during this time of transition, but also to attract out-of-state visitors. "We all need tools for life," says Southern,

and so Port Discovery will be a place where people can learn together, whether they come from California, suburban Maryland, or downtown Baltimore. According to Durel, who became executive director of BCLM in February 1996, Schmoke's administration has redefined Baltimore as a destination for people who want their leisure time to have some educational and cultural value. To Durel, each new museum is not a potential competitor but part of a collaborative effort to bring people to the downtown area: BCLM has its own "niche within this constellation of attractions here on the east side. And to the degree that those other places [will draw] people to this area, then I think we will benefit."

But it may not be as easy as it sounds. In November 1996, Durel resigned as executive director from the BCLM, reportedly under pressure from the museum's board of directors. According to Marketing and Public Relations Coordinator Jamie Hunt, the board felt the museum's 1996 attendance figures—two-thirds below a set goal of 100,000—were too low. The board now seeks an executive director with a strong marketing background, who can place BCLM under a national spotlight and thereby attract more out-of-town visitors.

Only few months before he resigned, Durel was cautiously optimistic about the future, characterizing Schmoke's plan for Baltimore as dependent on the fortunes and failures of the national economy. He described the city's economic strategy as "an act of faith," adding, "As long as there is enough leisure money being spent on the East Coast, I think we'll do fine." ■

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*Jane Lusaka is associate editor of Museum News.*

Opposite page: Port Discovery: The Children's Museum in Baltimore will feature Disney-designed exhibits (left); the Columbus Center will teach kids about marine science with larger-than-life exhibits (right).  
Below: City funds helped pay for the Baltimore Museum of Art's modern art wing, completed in 1994. Photo by Erik Kvalsvik.

**"Museums can help enrich children's lives and support some of the lessons that parents and schools are trying to teach."**

**—Baltimore Mayor  
Kurt L. Schmoke**





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## Exhibits

continued from page 27

used on the metal, glass, and textile artifacts found on the ocean floor. One of the largest objects recovered, the 800-pound ship's bollard (a thick post used for securing ropes), will receive conservation treatments while on display.

"Titanic" also examines a controversy that currently surrounds the salvage company. Though RMS Titanic removes objects only from the debris field surrounding the ship, some critics have called its efforts "grave robbing." Not surprisingly, RMS Titanic's president disagrees. "There are no body remains," says Tulloch. "Calcium doesn't last. The deep ocean doesn't take kindly to food sources. When we dive down to the wreckage, we don't see any dead lifeforms."

To Tulloch, preserving the *Titanic*'s history and her objects honors the memories of those who perished. Items such as naturalization papers listing a man's distinguishing characteristics help to turn a *Titanic* victim into "a human being, [not] just a typed name on the White Star Line passenger list," he says.

The Wonders exhibition presents both sides of this controversy, though RMS Titanic might have preferred that it remain unmentioned. "We are not RMS Titanic; their feelings are a little different," says Masler. He describes the collaboration with the company as a "when-worlds-collide kind of thing; a nonprofit exhibition [competing with] their desire to make money. But they have pledged not to sell the objects from the wreckage." And Masler believes that RMS Titanic is doing all it can to preserve the *Titanic* artifacts: "I was trained as an archaeologist, and no one could do it any better."

Tulloch sees RMS Titanic's mission as ensuring the proper display of the ship's artifacts and protecting them from the auction block and private collectors. The *Titanic* deserves its own museum, he says. "The collection now has 4,000 objects. My responsibility is to preserve [them] until they can find a proper home." **M**

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# Romance Versus Realism:

## *A Reflection on the Nature of Museums*

By Stephen E. Weil

Within the museum community, there are today two competing and profoundly different conceptions concerning the nature of a museum. Although rarely articulated in any explicit way, the implicit adoption of one or the other of these conceptions has important consequences in determining how those who support, govern, and staff any particular museum may go about establishing its priorities and evaluating its performance. The first of these conceptions (which, for convenience more than dead-on accuracy, will be referred to as the "romantic") is bottomed on the notion that a museum is *per se* an institution of universal and positive value. The premise of the second (which, for a similar reason, will be referred to as the "realistic") is that a museum itself is a value-neutral institution that can, as a kind of organizational instrument, be used for purposes which—depending upon one's perspective—may or may not be considered of positive value.

Traces of the romantic conception—i.e., that all museums are *per se* institutions of universal and positive value—can be found in such pronouncements as the ICOM definition of a museum (an "... institution in the service of society and of its development . . .") or UNESCO's 1960 Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone. In the

belief that museums effectively contribute to the mutual understandings of people by preserving works of art and scientific material and presenting them to the public, UNESCO promulgated a blanket recommendation that the general public be encouraged to visit museums, and that for this purpose museums should be made readily accessible. The romantic view that a museum is an inherently "good" organization is intuitively sympathetic. It has, as well, a number of attractive aspects. To begin with, it follows that if a museum is a "good" organization, then so, too (at least in some degree), must be those who are actively involved in its support, governance, and operation. Beyond any enhancement to self-esteem, however, the romantic conception of a museum offers two enormously practical advantages.

First, it permits a museum's management to focus on efficiency as the principal performance measure by which the organization's operations can be evaluated. Since the organization's work is, by definition, already good, the only question that remains to be asked is whether—in doing that work—the museum is maintaining a maximally positive relationship between the resources it consumes and the outputs it derives from those resources. Except in rare instances when some external benchmarks may be employed for the sake of comparison, that is a determination that can be made wholly from within the organization and without more than passing consideration to such uncontrollable and frequently elusive factors as visitor response or long-range community impact. Efficiency, moreover, is a mode of evaluation that those members of a museum's governing board who come from business back-

grounds may find familiar and comfortable to work with.

The romantic view of museums has a second practical advantage. It permits a museum to define success in terms of its own institutional survival. Again, since the organization is already defined as "good," then it would clearly be more beneficial to the community it serves if it continued to exist than if it did not. So long as the museum is able to secure the resources (whether earned or contributed) necessary to meet its operating costs, it can be considered a successful organization. If there ever comes a time when it is unable to do so (regardless of whether that inability is due to a diminution of resources or an increase in expenditures), it will then be a failed organization. In the relative simplicity of the ways in which they measure organizational performance and gauge success, managing for efficiency and managing for survival largely overlap. Conceived in the romantic mold, the well-managed museum is both externally strong in its fund-raising and other developmental activities and internally proficient in its utilization of budgetary and other controls to monitor expenses and maximize staff productivity.

Concealed within the romantic conception of museums, however, is a logical problem, or at least a paradox. As noted earlier, ICOM defines a museum as "... an institution in the service of society and of its development." This is the problem: scarcely within any single country and, certainly, not among different countries, is there any universal agreement as to what might or might not be of service to a given society and/or what might contribute appropriately to such a society's development. Situations may even arise—consider the history museums of the former Yugoslavia or a military museum in Iraq—in which the driving motive behind a museum's program activities might well be the very converse of that envisioned by UNESCO. A museum might deliberately seek to foster a profound misunderstanding by one people of another.

What objects a museum chooses to collect and exhibit, and how it does so, must invariably reflect a point of view. To the extent that points of view can and do differ sharply, the possibility that

museums might serve as agents of universal understanding seems illusory. How much "mutual understanding" might be generated, for example, by an Invisible Empire Museum located in Louisiana or Tennessee and dedicated to glorifying the immediate post-Civil War activities of the Knights of the White Camellia or the Ku Klux Klan? More grotesquely, consider how things might be if the Axis Powers had triumphed in World War II and the National Socialist Party, undiminished in its virulence, still held absolute power in Germany. Is it not conceivable that Berlin might today boast a Museum of the Final Solution, a museum that looked and functioned in every respect like Washington's Holocaust Museum in reverse?

For those who had the opportunity to spend time in the history museums of Eastern Europe before the collapse of its communist regimes, such a possibility is not so far-fetched. The Marxist-Leninist version of history encountered in those museums not only appeared, at least from the perspective of Western visitors, to be at variance with the truth. It also appeared, again from such a perspective, deliberately calculated to arouse in museum visitors a deep hostility toward the West and its most deeply held values. In a world of conflicting interests, a museum that serves one community beneficially may, when considered from the perspective of another, appear to be anything but inherently benign.

Accepting the reality that such institutions cannot universally serve as agents of mutual understanding, those advancing the alternative conception of museums propose a view based on a different set of premises entirely. It is, in many senses, a distinctly unromantic view. To start, they envision museum work as akin to the practice of a technology rather than as an activity that can be considered virtuous in itself. Museum workers are fundamentally technicians. They have developed and passed along

to their successors systematic ways in which to deal with the objects (and with information about those objects) that their museums collect and make accessible to the public. Through training and experience they have developed a high level of expertise as to how those objects ought properly be collected, preserved, restored, classified, catalogued, studied, displayed, interpreted, stored, transported, and safeguarded.

From there, proponents of this view go on to argue that—notwithstanding the frequent references to its educational function—the museum in its public interactions is more closely analogous to a broadcasting station than it is to any traditional school. Like such a station, it disseminates information and provides experiences to a largely self-selected audience that it encounters in relatively unstructured and informal circumstances. And, just like such a station, the museum is not truly significant just because it can survive at a certain level of activity, just as the station has the technical capacity to maintain itself on the air. What is truly significant is its program content—what it disseminates and, more important, why it does so. The focus of a museum conceived in the realistic mode is not on survival but on purpose, the basic why of what it does. What does such a museum hope or expect to accomplish through its program activities? How does it anticipate that those accomplishments will make a positive difference to the community that it intends to serve?

Because the crucial relationship in a museum viewed in this manner is between intention and outcome, the principal measure by which its operations can best be evaluated will not be efficiency—as is the case for the romantically considered museum—but effectiveness. To what extent is the organization in fact able to accomplish what it has set out to accomplish in terms of the results or outcomes itulti-

mately seeks to produce? In such a museum, questions with respect to efficiency are not unimportant, but they are subordinate. Unless and until the museum is demonstrably able to accomplish its purpose, questions as to its efficiency or inefficiency may simply be irrelevant. On the other hand, once such a museum can demonstrate its effectiveness, questions of efficiency then become central. The greater such a museum's efficiency, the more it can accomplish with the same resources or, alternatively, the fewer resources it may require to maintain the same level of accomplishment.

If the romantic view of museums offers several practical advantages, the realistic mode is burdened with several practical difficulties. For many in the museum community, defining institutional purpose in terms of intended outcomes has proven problematic. Museum workers are far more accustomed to casting statements about institutional mission either in terms of function ("to collect, preserve, and interpret") or of program activities ("to provide the community with a comprehensive program of exhibitions that. . ."). Recasting an institution in terms of intended outcomes will require those responsible to step well away from their daily work and to ask themselves some fundamental questions as to just why that work is being done. How will the community we serve be positively different as a result of our effort? How much difference would it make if we had never undertaken such an effort to begin with?

A second and perhaps greater practical difficulty for museums considered in this mode has to do with ascertaining—if not actually measuring—outcomes. In general, the ways in which museums affect both individuals and communities tend to be subtle, cumu-

(Please turn to Forum, page 66)

# FORUM

# 1996 AAM Admission Policy Guide Addenda

The following corrections and additions should be made to the 1996 AAM *Admission Policy Guide*.

The guide's contents are based on responses to a questionnaire mailed to all institutional members in the spring of 1996. Like the guide itself, the listings below are organized alphabetically by state and city.

## The following institutions were omitted:

Moundville Archaeological Park, Moundville, Ala. .... **F**  
Alabama Museum of Natural History, Tuscaloosa .... **F**  
Arboretum at Flagstaff, Flagstaff, Ariz. .... **F D**  
Arizona Museum for Youth, Mesa ..... **F**  
Arkansas Territorial Restoration, Little Rock .... **F**  
California Afro-American Museum, Los Angeles .... **G**  
Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles .... **F**  
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park .... **F D**  
San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, Calif. .... **F**  
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington ..... **F**  
Dumbarton House, Washington, D.C. .... **F**  
Boise Art Museum, Boise, Idaho ..... **F D**  
Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Ill. .... **G**  
Sanford Museum and Planetarium, Cherokee, Iowa ..... **G**  
University of Kentucky Art Museum, Lexington .... **G D**  
Fort Polk Military Museum, Fort Polk, La. .... **G**  
USS Constitution Museum, Boston ..... **F**  
University of Michigan Exhibit Museum of Natural History, Ann Arbor ..... **G**  
Old Capitol Museum, Jackson, Miss. .... **G**  
Museum of Art and Archaeology, Columbia, Mo. .... **G D**  
Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis ..... **R D**  
Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Santa Fe, N.Mex. .... **F**  
(museum opens summer 1997)

New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science, Albuquerque ..... **F D**  
Fenimore House Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. .... **F D**  
National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. .... **F**  
National Soaring Museum, Elmira, N.Y. .... **F**  
Hicksville Gregory Museum, Hicksville, N.Y. .... **F**  
Walt Whitman Birthplace, Huntington Station, N.Y. .... **F**  
King Manor Museum, Jamaica, N.Y. .... **F**  
National Academy of Design Museum, New York .... **F**  
George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y. .... **F**  
Temple Museum of Religious Art, Cleveland, Ohio .... **G**  
Oklahoma City Art Museum ..... **F D**  
Oregon History Center, Portland, Oreg. .... **F**  
National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia .... **R D**  
Austin Children's Museum, Austin, Tex. .... **F**  
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston ..... **F**  
Governor Bill & Vara Daniel Historic Village, Waco, Tex. .... **F**  
Ollie Mae Moen Discovery Center, Waco, Tex. .... **G**  
Strecker Museum, Waco, Tex. .... **G**  
Museum of the San Rafael, Castle Dale, Utah .... **G**  
North House Museum, Lewisburg, W.Va. .... **F**

## Admission Policy Codes:

**F** - Free admission to AAM members  
**R** - Reduced admission to AAM members  
**G** - Free public admission  
**D** - Discount to AAM members on museum store merchandise  
\* - AAM accredited institution

## The following institutions should have been coded as accredited:

Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, Ala.  
Arizona State Museum, Tucson  
Monterey Peninsula Museum of Art, Monterey, Calif.  
Hearst Art Gallery, Moraga, Calif.  
Western Museum of Mining & Industry, Colorado Springs  
Loveland Museum, Loveland, Colo.  
National Museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C.  
Telfair Museum of Art, Savannah, Ga.  
McLean County Historical Society, Bloomington, Ill.  
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, Mass.  
Springfield Museums, Springfield, Mass.  
Roberson Museum & Science Center, Binghamton, N.Y.  
The Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y.  
Fraunces Tavern Museum, New York  
Landmark Society of West New York, Rochester  
Strong Museum, Rochester, N.Y.  
Rensselaer County Historical Society Museum, Troy, N.Y.  
Reynolda House Inc. Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, N.C.  
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Okla.  
National Canal Museum, Easton, Pa.  
State Museum of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg  
Pennsburry Manor, Morrisville, Pa.  
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia  
Drake Well Museum, Titusville, Pa.  
Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, Tenn.  
Old City Park, Dallas  
Prehistoric Museum, Price, Utah  
Belmont, The Gari Melchers Museum, Fredericksburg, Va.  
Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Spokane, Wash.  
Wustum Museum, Racine, Wis.

## The following museums were mistakenly coded as accredited:

Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology, Andover, Mass.  
Fruitlands Museums, Inc., Harvard, Mass.  
Rochester Historical Society, Rochester, N.Y.

National Museum of Racing, Inc., Springs, N.Y.  
Lincoln County Historical Society, Newport, Oreg.

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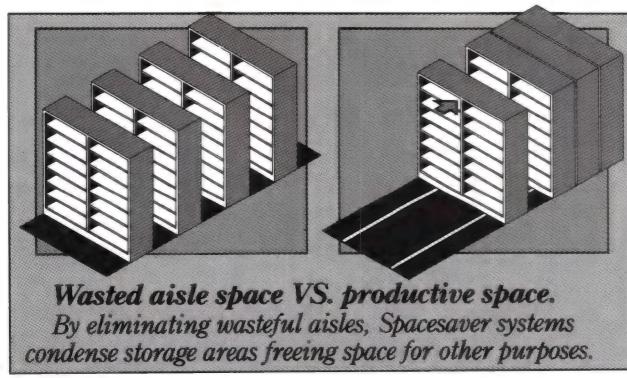
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# Competing in the Arena:

## THE 1997 AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

By Susan Ciccotti

Atlanta to consider such topics as the connection between museums and the growing market for travel and cultural tourism; how financial stability can be achieved in an era of declining public support; and how museums can participate when governments and businesses work together.

Program sessions and an information-packed MuseumExpo at the Georgia World Congress Center, a myriad of affiliate and committee meetings at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, and evening events around Atlanta will give participants ample exposure to the latest information and

issues as well as the chance to meet colleagues and friends from around the country. Spanning the practical to the provocative, the meeting's contents should appeal to everyone in the profession, from the novice to the most seasoned professional.

Setting the tone for the meeting's theme and giving perspective to its southern locale will be keynote addresses by two award-winning authors. On Sunday, in her talk, "The South: A Sense of Place," journalist and author Melissa Fay Greene will draw a literary vision of the region, its culture, people, and communities. Greene wrote the award-winning book *Praying For Sheetrock*, a compelling story of the political awakening of the rural African-American community of coastal McIntosh County, Ga. On Monday, historian and

Pulitzer-prize winner William S. McFeely will provide a historical perspective of the South. McFeely is the Abraham Baldwin Professor in Humanities at the University of Georgia, and is also the author of *Yankee Stepfather: General O. O. Howard and Freedmen*, as well as biographies of Ulysses S. Grant and Frederick Douglass.

With more than 140 program sessions from which to choose, delegates will be able to craft a highly specialized meeting plan that fits their individual interests. Sure to engender lively discussion will be sessions such as "Museum Scenarios Year 2007: Visioneering and Planning for the Future Today" (Monday, 8:30-9:45 a.m.) and "Taboo or Tool: Deaccessioning and Collections Management" (Wednesday, 9:00-10:15 a.m.). On the philosophical side, "'A More Perfect Union': Museums and the Discussion of American Identity" (Sunday, 10:00-11:15 a.m.) will ask attendees to consider whether museums should focus on the profound demographic, cultural, political, and economic changes in U.S. society.

On the more "nuts and bolts" side of museum work, sessions such as "From the Crate to the Wall" (Monday, 8:30-9:45 a.m.) will deal with the skills required for properly packing and unpacking objects.



"Fund Raising in the Corporate Arena: How to Bring Home the Gold" (Monday, 2:00-3:15 p.m.) will explore how nonprofits can tap the growing corporate connection between philanthropy and marketing.

As a follow-up to the well-attended 1993 session with artist Frank Stella, the forum "The Artist and Museum II" (Monday, 2:00-3:15 p.m.) will feature modern master Jim Dine. A painter and sculptor whose career has spanned more than 40 years, Dine will offer his insight into the artist's role in society and relationship with the museum world.

Sure to be popular as well is the Town Meeting on Fair Use of Digital Imaging to be held on Sunday from 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. As images become easier to reproduce and send over the Internet, the issue of fair use is of concern to all museums. This

and "Going Independent" as a Consultant." A job placement office also will offer current employment postings.

As a new feature this year, AAM, in collaboration with the Museum Trustee Association, will present a series of programs addressing issues of concern to trustees and directors from all sizes and type of museums. Expanding this group's horizons will be sessions such as "When Being There Isn't Enough: Minority Trustees in Mainstream Institutions" (Sunday, 10-11:15 a.m.), "Executive/Board Relationships: Effective Working Partnerships" (Wednesday, 9-11:45 a.m.), and a Trustee Issues Forum (Sunday, 3-5 p.m.). Some activities of special interest to executive directors/CEOs will include the CEO Marketplace (Sunday, 3-5 p.m.), AAM's Directors Breakfast (Monday, 7:30-8:30 a.m.),

and sessions such as "Coping 101—Strategies for Renewal for Museum CEOs" (Tuesday, 8:45-10 a.m.).

Attendees should also be sure to set aside some time to visit MuseumExpo97. There, they can drop by the AAM Resource Center where staff will be on hand to answer questions regarding programs and services. The latest issues of *Aviso* and *Museum News* will be available at the center. Visitors also will want to check out the AAM Bookstore for Museum Professionals and the winners of the 1997 AAM Museum Publications Design Competition. Close at hand will be the Internet Forum, highlighting the latest in Internet technology and new ways in which museums can use the World Wide Web. In addition, several informal poster sessions are scheduled to take place inside MuseumExpo during program session breaks.

Rounding out the meeting experience, delegates will have the opportunity to enjoy Atlanta—site of the '96 Olympics and home to a myriad of cultural institutions.

AAM hopes to see you there! ■

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Left: The Museum of the Jimmy Carter Library houses resources from the White House. Top right: Herndon Home, residence of the late Alonzo Herndon. Photos by Kevin C. Rose.



## PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

AAM gratefully acknowledges the following local institutions for their support of the 1997 Annual Meeting.

Atlanta Botanical Garden  
Atlanta College of Art  
Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau  
Atlanta Heritage Row  
Atlanta History Center  
Atlanta International Museum of Art and Design  
Manget Brannon Center for the Arts  
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SciTrek, The Science and Technology Museum of Atlanta  
Archibald Smith Plantation Home  
Southeastern Museums Conference  
Stone Mountain Park  
The Teaching Museum-South Fulton County Schools  
Robert C. Williams American Museum of Papermaking  
Zoo Atlanta

# ANNUAL MEETING IN ATLANTA

timely concurrent session will explore the issues surrounding copyright law challenges in light of digital networks.

For an update on the status of AAM's strategic plan, delegates will want to attend the Town Meeting on Monday from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m., where members of the AAM Strategic Planning Committee and staff will discuss how the project will help the association and its members respond effectively to change over the next three to five years.

Giving valuable structure to the mingling and networking that always takes place during the four-day meeting will be "Mentoring Groups for Young Professionals." Back by popular demand, these informal roundtable discussions to be held from 11 a.m. to 12 noon on Sunday and from 12 noon to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, are led by experienced professionals and offer an opportunity for idea swapping. Sample topics include "Making an Imperfect Job Rewarding" and "Deciding When to Change Jobs." Adding a new twist this year is the addition of "Mutual Mid-Career Mentoring" roundtable discussions that will be held Sunday through Tuesday (exact times will be announced). Topics include "Facing Institutional Change," "Going Back to School (at 30, 40, or 50),"

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## CyberMuse *continued from page 32*

face-to-face. Thus many of the complementary advantages of the physical and the virtual are combined.

### The Infobahn, Cultural Institutions, and the City of the Future

As these discussions have illustrated, the personal computer and the evolving infobahn have created a new economy of presence within which museums must now attempt to define their role. The opportunities presented by the evolving economy of presence will also have a major impact on other cultural and educational institutions, such as theaters, libraries, colleges, and universities. In each case, traditional forms will give way to an array of offerings based on the level of presence required for each function performed.

Furthermore, there are numerous interesting opportunities for new sorts of institutions to emerge within this new economy of presence. As networks continue to extend their reach and coverage, as bandwidth burgeons, and as digital

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**Club Quarters Washington** is conveniently located at 17th and Eye Sts. N.W., two and a half blocks from the White House and adjacent to the Farragut West Metro station. And it is just two blocks from AAM's new offices in the heart of the central business district. AAM members are guaranteed a rate of \$109.00 on weekdays; lower rates starting at just \$59.00 are available on the weekend.

**Club Quarters' two locations in New York**—Wall Street and midtown—are also currently available for business and personal use by AAM members. Weekday rates are \$139.00, and the weekend rate starts at \$69.00. Club Quarters will open a Boston location in spring 1997.

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environments become more and more sophisticated, overcoming some of the current limitations that we have discussed, the competition from remotely accessible and asynchronous sites of cultural activity will be increasingly intense. What, then, are the prospects for cultural institutions? And what is their likely role in the city of the 21st century?

As the economy of presence matures, traditional museums (as well as live theaters, book-filled libraries, and university campuses) will only be able to maintain their prime real estate, and convince audiences and benefactors to cover their relatively high costs, if they vigorously emphasize the unique kinds of value that physical space and face-to-face presence can add to an experience. By the same logic, museums without unique and important collections or spaces that offer little architectural quality or opportunity for satisfying social interaction are unlikely to compete successfully with virtual environments that offer comparable services more conveniently and at lower cost. Paradoxically, then, the digital revolution may end up making successful museums more physical, hands-on, and

dependent on face-to-face interaction—not less.

At the same time, associated functions that do not intrinsically depend on physicality and face-to-face interaction will be pulled irresistibly into cyberspace. For example, many of the computer-based, interactive exhibits that are so popular in science museums might as well be delivered, more widely and conveniently, via the Internet. As a result of such shifts, many activities that once were centralized in museums will be dispersed increasingly to homes, schools, airplane seats, and other such locations.

In general, then, cultural institutions that add value to high levels of presence will be the ones to survive—in physical form—in the city of the future. Museums will concentrate on those aspects that work best (or at all) at high levels of presence in their physical manifestation, while carrying out their remaining functions more cost-effectively using lower levels of presence. On the one hand, they will create intense foci of hands-on, face-to-face experience. On the other, they will employ digital electronic means to deliver access to large, highly dispersed

audiences, and to broker information on an unprecedented scale.

There may be a lesson here for cities in general. As commerce, entertainment, education, governance, and other activities shift increasingly to cyberspace, there will be diminished motivation to locate these activities in high-cost urban centers. But cities will continue to provide appropriate contexts for cultural institutions that provide unique, valuable, face-to-face experiences, and these institutions will be key to the continued attraction and importance of those urban centers that keep maintaining them. Paradoxically, then, the general decentralization of activity that seems likely to follow from the shift to cyberspace will enhance, rather than diminish, the importance of those urban centers that have genuine cultural significance. **M**

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*William J. Mitchell is dean, School of Architecture and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Oliver B. R. Strimpel is executive director, The Computer Museum, Boston. This article is an edited excerpt of a chapter to appear in Beyond Calculation, to be published by Springer-Verlag New York in March.*

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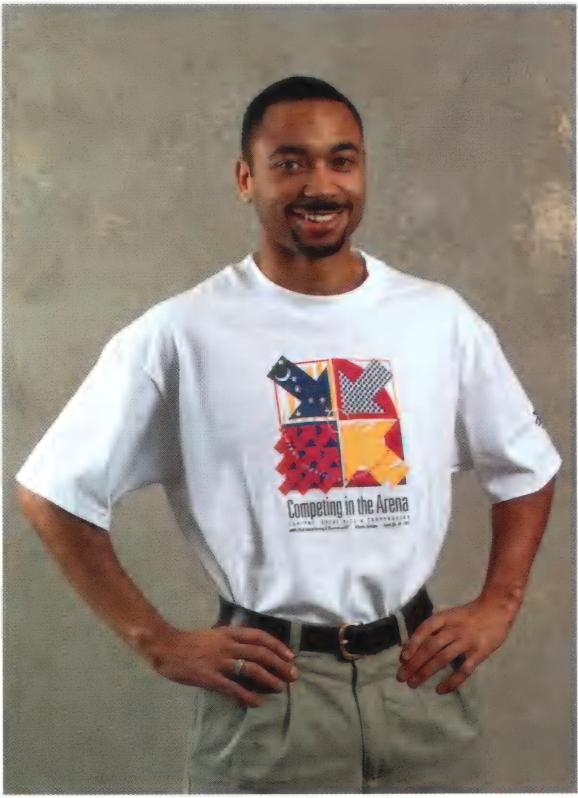


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continued from page 29

right corner of the diagram. Feel the series of curved lines. These lines are part of a large curved solid-rough area. This solid-rough area is the large billowing drapery that hangs in the painting's upper-right corner. The raised lines within this pattern represent the drapery's folds. The drapery occupies the painting's upper-right foreground. In our diagram, the drapery's edge begins in the middle of the upper edge and swings down to the right edge. Follow the diagram's right edge down about two inches to see where the drapery is pulled out of the picture."

These tactile diagrams are more than the old fashioned, thermoform raised-line drawings of 10 or so years ago. They establish pictorial areas through various raised patterns of repeated dots and lines, in an attempt to translate more than the edge of a shape. While they strike me as an improvement over the old fashioned variety, I will leave it to the sight-impaired or blind person to evaluate their actual effectiveness as a learning tool, especially in the absence of corresponding black-and-white photographs. Only the smallest percentage of blind persons are totally blind, and many sight-impaired users may be able to glean a fuller understanding of the works of art from photographs, particularly if they are high contrast prints and if the accompanying audio encourages them to do so. Herein lies the challenge to the authors, who consulted with blind consumers in developing this package of materials. Each sight-impaired or blind person has different needs, and the tactile diagram that helps an enthusiastic, 20-year-old, well-educated college student who was blind at birth may not necessarily assist the older person whose sight *and* sense of touch were lost mid-life due to diabetes. Some tools—be they braille, large type, high-contrast photographs, or tactile diagrams—are useful for some blind people, but not every tool is useful to every sight-impaired or blind person.

The authors cleverly use the tactile diagrams to discuss issues of composition, iconography, light patterns, and narrative. Except for the few referencing architectural floor plans, the over-simplification required to produce the diagrams lends an independent character to

each one. The diagrams for Gianlorenzo Bernini's sculptures or Frans Hals's paintings, for example, more closely resemble cartoons from the Sunday comic pages than the original works of art. Art historically, the package is most effective in discussing architecture. The difference between a floor plan and a tactile diagram is not nearly as great as that between a sculpture or painting and a tactile diagram. Still, because the diagrams isolate particular aspects of the artworks, such as light pattern and composition, this package provides the novice art historian, disabled or able-bodied, with instruction in how to look at a work of art, and perhaps a confidence level necessary to continue an exploration of the 17th century with the likes of Anthony Blunt.

The prose is uneven. At times, the script is remarkably sensitive to the work of art. Consider this description of architect Carlo Maderno's entrance facade for St. Peter's Basilica: "There are deep shadows between the column and wall because the columns project from the building's surface. Our attention is drawn toward the contrast created by these dark shadows against the light stone of the building. Our eyes travel more rapidly from the facade's edge toward the cast shadows around the main entrance. Maderno has exploited the natural effects of light and manipulated our visual experience of St. Peter's facade."

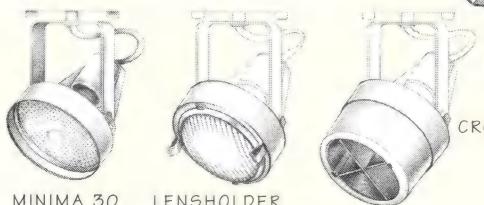
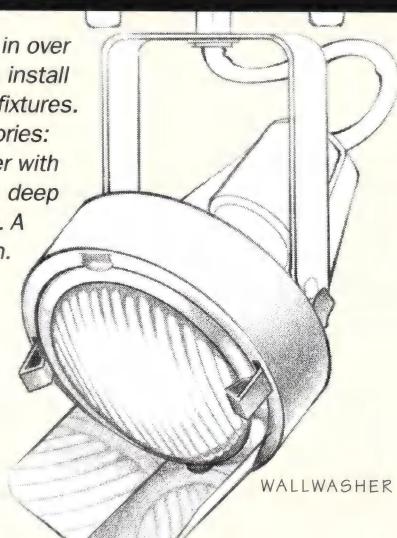
But elsewhere the script is awkward and inappropriate. Sequential paragraphs often begin with "let's begin" or "let's continue" or "let's examine." Information is too frequently dished out as if it were a plate of scrambled eggs, as in, "Here's a third innovation Hals introduced into his portrait painting" and, later on the same page, "Here's another way Hals draws our attention toward the painting's most important details." The reader often feels as though he is being patronized rather than respected. "Let's do this or that" is minimally acceptable as a form of address to children, but is inappropriate for adults, especially at the level of repetition here.

Finally, the identity of the author is never made clear. Most art history books include a brief biography that establishes the book's scholarly authority. In the publication's accompanying press mate-

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rials, there is frequent mention of Art Education for the Blind, Inc., and its staff, but there is little reference to the co-author, consulting art historian Paula Gerson. If this package is to be widely used by the scholarly community, and if the notion of teaching art history to blind persons is to be accepted seriously, publications like *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century* must conform to mainstream scholarly standards. Clearly, the unusual use of tactile diagrams is necessary. But so is the participation of a clearly recognizable art historian with impeccable credentials. Otherwise a promising publication like this one, which could help sight-impaired persons study art history on college campuses and in museums, will be relegated to recreation programs in social agencies where scholarly standards are not at issue.

Despite these criticisms, *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century* is an extremely important publication for the fields of art history and special education. It will help to move blind art history students (and their teachers) away from dependence on art museum touch collections

of arbitrarily selected reproductions and third-rate originals to a cohesive art history curriculum. The authors have been especially thoughtful in including some works of art from American collections. While it is certainly important to teach about masterpieces wherever they might be in the world, it is also important to point out those in close proximity to the reader. When I was a tuition-paying sophomore, travel to Europe, and thus to many of the works of art discussed in Blunt's book, seemed out of reach. For the reader of *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century*, works of art in Florida or New York might be more practical to visit during a school break.

There is no substitute for the study of the greatest works of art wherever they may be located, but those of us who are or have been instructors of blind students have the extra burden of selling the public on the concept of teaching art history to the sight-impaired. To achieve this goal, there is no better marketing strategy than bringing the blind consumer as close as possible to historic works of visual art. When it is complet-

ed, the *Art History Through Touch and Sound* series aims to realize this important mission. And it is reasonable to expect that an opus with such grand ambition will, like Blunt's book or other basic art history texts, be repeatedly revised and reissued in successive editions. So, while *Baroque Art in the Seventeenth Century* is flawed, it is nonetheless such an important publication that its problems will surely be addressed. It is up to those of us in the field to use the package and to convey our experiences to Gerson and Art Education for the Blind, Inc., in the hope that a classic introductory textbook accessing art history for blind and sight-impaired persons, not to mention sighted people, will eventually evolve. **M**

Charles K. Steiner is associate director, The Art Museum, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J. As a museum educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, from 1977 to 1986, he developed programs for visitors with disabilities, including blind people.

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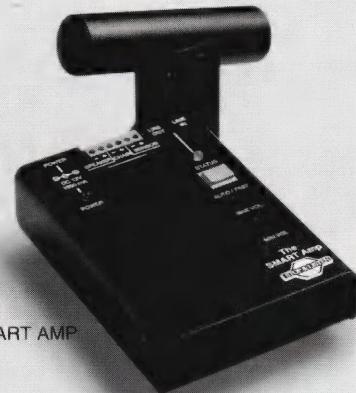
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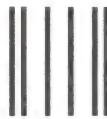
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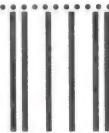
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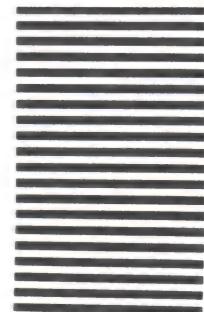
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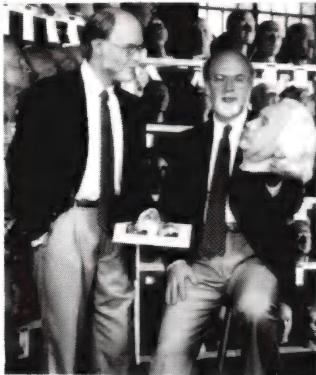
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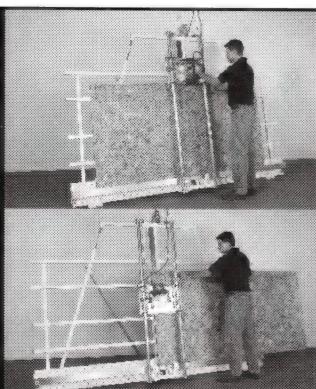


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lative over time, difficult to disentangle from the influence of schools and other cultural organizations, and—in comparison with such high-drama, life-saving organizations as shelters for abused children or Alpine rescue squads—incremental rather than critical in their impact. Organizations that regularly deal with issues of life and death can frequently cite hard statistical evidence to support their value. Organizations whose primary purpose is not to save lives but to enhance them may have to find more qualitative or even anecdotal ways in which to determine and describe their accomplishments.

Only by developing the means required to ascertain whether and to what extent it is actually accomplishing what it intends to accomplish—beyond any question, a daunting task; but also essential—can the management of a purpose-driven museum make sound judgments with respect to its present and

future program activities. Moreover, only by demonstrating the positive difference that such a museum can actually make in the life of its community can its management make the strongest case for continued support. Whereas the hallmarks of the well-managed museum in the romantic mode are strong developmental capacity and sound internal controls, a well-managed museum conceived in the realistic mode must not only possess both of those attributes but, as important, a strongly articulated sense of purpose together with the feedback mechanisms necessary to determine on a continuing basis whether and to what extent that purpose is actually being accomplished.

Proponents of the realistic conception of museums do not argue that there is any one particular outcome that every museum ought pursue. What they do argue, however, is that a museum must be able to articulate how its primary program activities will ultimately benefit the community. Whether the museum focuses its efforts on preserving particu-

lar collections, educating the public with respect to a specific subject matter, reinforcing and perpetuating the community's heritage, providing its visitors with an aesthetic or other experience, serving as a catalyst for the community's social development, advancing scholarship in a particular field, or boosting the community's economy through its attractiveness as a tourist or leisure destination, the point is the same: its programs must make a positive difference to its community. This is the key. As phrased in a recent publication from United Way of America—a pioneer in developing outcome-based evaluation in the human services field—organizations whose program activities are purpose-driven must be able to specify:

“... [intended] benefits or changes for individuals or populations during or after participating in program activities. [Outcomes] are influenced by a program's outputs. Outcomes may relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, or other attributes. They are what par-

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ticipants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program."

Must one of these conceptions ultimately prevail over the other, or might there be some middle ground where the romantic and realistic conceptions of museums could be harmonized? Finding the latter seems unlikely. Each of these conceptions focuses on a different performance measure as the principal means by which a museum ought to evaluate itself: efficiency in the case of the romantic conception, effectiveness in the case of the realistic one. In an organization working at its fullest potential, efficiency and effectiveness might for a time be synchronous. In a less optimal situation, however, their combination would not be sustainable. When hard choices had to be made, a museum's governance and management would find that it ultimately had to give either efficiency or effectiveness priority over the other. What seems more likely than any harmonization is that one of

these conceptions will in time become dominant throughout the museum community. What also seems likely is that it may be the funding community rather than either the museum community or any compelling logic that ultimately determines which that dominant conception will be.

Beginning with the human services area, outcome-based evaluation is becoming a commonplace of the non-profit sector across the United States. Foundations and other experienced funders are shifting—to quote again from a recent United Way publication—"from a focus on activities to a focus on results." Whether such an approach is as appropriate to museums and other cultural organizations as it is to human service organizations may be a moot point. As funding sources become increasingly accustomed to asking what real differences in real lives an applicant organization is making—not simply, as once was the case, wanting to be assured that their grant funds were properly used—museums may have little choice but to adopt

the realistic conception. In the long run, though, that might prove a benefit. Viewed from outside their own sometimes insular world, museums might find themselves more highly regarded than ever when they are consistently able to present themselves as organizations that warrant support through their demonstrable effectiveness in accomplishing well-articulated and worthwhile purposes that can logically be shown to make a positive difference to their communities. ■

*Stephen E. Weil is emeritus senior scholar at the Center for Museum Studies, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. This spring, he is a scholar-in-residence at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. As part of the college's Artists, Scholars, and Executives in Residence Program, he will deliver a public lecture entitled "The Museum and the Public" on April 2. For more information, please contact: Joan Jeffri, Director, Program in Arts Administration, Teachers College, Box 78, 525 W. 120th St., New York, NY 10027; 212/678-3268.*

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from museum to museum, position to position, and discipline to discipline. We are "training leaders" for the museum profession, but our students are taught that you lead from any professional position within the museum. Leadership means bringing in projects and budgets on time, working creatively to move group projects forward, supervising assigned employees to complete tasks, understanding and supporting the museum and its programs, and carrying out all other responsibilities of the position in the appropriate manner. It does not mean starting at the top of a museum or the profession. Our students welcome entry-level positions so they can begin accumulating the experience that they know they will need to move forward in their chosen profession. The real challenge for our graduates is learning of the availability of these entry-level positions, which are usually only advertised locally. The museum profession must find a way to advertise these posi-

tions at a rate that all museums can afford.

I agree with Spiess that museums are not universities and universities are not museums, but those of us at university-based museums are uniquely positioned to bridge this gap. Furthermore, those university-based museums that are associated with museum studies programs are in a position to provide the academic and professional education necessary for students. University-related museums make up about 8 percent of the museums listed in *The Official Museum Directory*; however, examining any AAM committee or governing body, you will find that university-based museum personnel are seldom represented. For example, the important AAM Strategic Planning Committee has only a single university-based museum representative, who is only an ex officio member of the committee. If our primary professional museum organization is on the whole ignoring university-based museums and associated academic programs, then it should

come as no surprise that there is a dichotomy between academic and museum approaches to training for the museum profession.

The museum profession has hurt itself as well as academic museum studies programs by not being particularly scholarly in its work. By this I meant that we have not developed a sufficient body of scholarly information in published or other reproducible formats to support the profession or academic programs. We generally pass information by word of mouth, which results in "traditions" that may or may not have a basis in fact. To develop a scholarly body of information, it must be available to all who are interested and subjected to scrutiny and review. We are particularly short of scholarly information about the philosophical basis of our profession and its history. We do much better with hands-on information that covers the mechanistic side of our profession. We have a profession with no national scholarly journal, with only *Curator, The Museum Journal*, pub-

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lished by the American Museum of Natural History, left to fill the void. *Museum News* from AAM gives us a beautiful professional magazine, but it does not fill the need for a scholarly journal.

If the question posed by Spiess remains are museum studies programs doing their jobs, I believe the answer is "yes." However, if the question becomes will museum studies programs succeed, I must answer "I do not know." The answer to this question lies in the future and will depend on acceptance and support from the museum profession.

*Hugh H. Genoways*

*Professor*

*University of Nebraska State Museum  
and Museum Studies Program  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln*

### **Filling the Gap**

Your November/December issue's cover story article, "Museum Studies: Are They Doing Their Job?," prompts this response:

The article, by Philip D. Spiess II, purports to be a comprehensive account

of museum studies programs in America—their histories, curricula, and attendant issues; yet nowhere is there even mention of (much less a thoughtful look at) the newest and most innovative program within this field, which is the Center of Curatorial Studies and Art in Contemporary Culture at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. Opened to M.A. degree students—most of them practicing curators—in 1994, the program was constructed to rectify precisely the conflicts and tensions noted by Spiess in his analysis of the museum studies field in general.

The CCS curriculum combines both theory and practice, without apology or extreme self-consciousness, in a two-year academic program plus summer internship that includes courses in art history, philosophy of aesthetics, curatorial pedagogy, cultural history and theory, and curatorial ethics, while also offering practice-centered courses in history of exhibitions, issues of conservation, site-specific exhibition, film and video, and exhibition architecture and

design. Unlike many of the museum studies programs cited in Spiess's article, which struggle to decide whether to explore why they came to exist in the first place, what they teach and why, and whether what they teach matters anymore in the postmodern period, CCS courses walk across such tradition-bound binaries. They are taught by theorists, art historians, working museum curators, art writers, designers, architects, conservators (from the U.S., Europe, Latin America); and they include seminars, practica, and tutorials, as well as structured "conversations" with a steady stream of guest artists, curators, and critics.

To my mind, the CCS program is like no other American program, in that it attempts to contextualize curatorial (and other museum) practices with the practices of art-making, learning, economics, and culture that exist instead of simply focusing on a goal of How to Exhibit and Store the Objects That Museums Collect.

The problems faced by the tradition-

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al museum studies programs featured in Spiess's article seem to me to be linked to the same weaknesses that have surfaced in many U.S. degree-granting institutions of any kind: narrowness to "discipline"; overemphasis on certification and so-called professional standards; rigid systems of promotion and tenure; and, in the end, a showdown with other disciplines and departments over questions of students, turf, prestige, and financial resources. By refusing to be hamstrung by such institutional (museums as well as universities) confining practices, the Center for Curatorial Studies continues to work through a new field-specific model of education by constantly examining both itself and the field in which its students will toil.

I think it odd, but perhaps telling, that none of this was brought into Spiess's account.

*Mara Miller  
New York*

*The writer received her M.A. from the Center for Curatorial Studies in 1996.*

### Family Ties

I was glad to see the lengthy article covering the promotion of "Grant Wood: An American Master Revealed" at its third venue, the Worcester Art Museum [M Notes, January/February 1997]. I was disappointed, however, that the Davenport Museum of Art was not credited as the organizing institution for the exhibition.

I was again displeased to see the article perpetuate an erroneous interpretation of Grant Wood's best-known painting, *American Gothic*. As noted in the exhibition catalogue (*Grant Wood: An American Master Revealed*, p. 41, note 38), the artist clearly stated in 1933 that the relationship of the couple is man and wife, not "widowed father and daughter" as reported on page 11 of *Museum News*.

*Brady Roberts  
Curator of Collections & Exhibitions  
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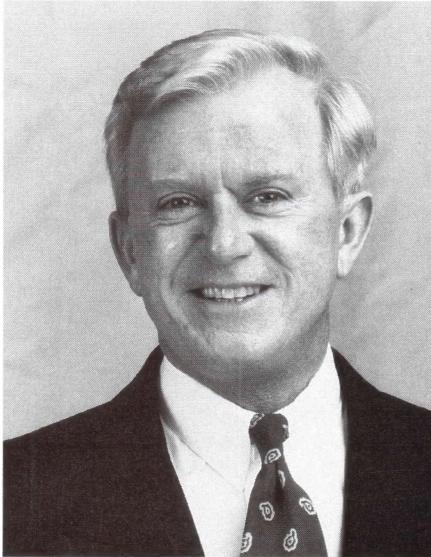
# Competition and Identity

BY EDWARD H. ABLE, JR.

The theme of the 1997 AAM Annual Meeting is "Competing in the Arena: Content, Creativity, and Cooperation." As society rapidly changes, and as cultural institutions play expanding roles in their communities, museums are indeed becoming more competitive. They are competing with each other and with other organizations for shrinking financial support from public and private sources. And they are competing for the public's available time—an increasingly valuable commodity in this country, where people seem to be busier and busier with the demands of work and family.

The entertainment industry is adept at persuading people to spend their precious free time and money at various venues like theme parks and children's play spaces—some of which have been taking on museum-like qualities lately. In fact, the leaders of this industry have become so successful that some museums have been appropriating a few of their methods in an effort to increase audience size and satisfaction. Whether or not a museum strives for such emulation, the fact remains that entertainment venues are extremely popular. More and more, cultural institutions are feeling compelled to compete with them for the public's attention and time.

This sense of competitiveness can help museums by spurring them to improve, and we can learn some valuable lessons from the entertainment industry's success. Like entertainment venues, we offer to the public an opportunity for interaction with companions and families, and—not least—edification. But as we compete in this new arena, we must be careful not to lose sight of who we are. We have certain responsibilities that make us very different from entertainment venues. We are stewards of important resources and we are professional educators. When it comes to telling sto-



Edward H. Able, Jr., is president and CEO of the American Association of Museums.

ries to the public, most entertainment venues rely upon virtual experiences. We, on the other hand, have actual objects that charge us with important duties and lend us an important identity that we must take care to maintain, nurture, and promote.

At its meeting this January, the AAM Board of Directors considered Part I of the association's Strategic Plan, which outlines a set of broad goals for the association to pursue over the next three years. It focuses on the unique identity of museums, and also raises the issue of competition with other organizations.

The plan stresses that museums "are educational institutions" and suggests that AAM communicate this role "to all levels of decision makers and to the public." It also states that museums "have a responsibility to society for the natural and cultural resources entrusted to their care" and says that the association should "guide museums to strategies that demonstrate museums' public accountability." Among the challenges and opportunities identified as those facing

the museum community is this one: "Distinctions between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations and/or between cultural and recreational organizations are blurring. Museums will need to position themselves in these circumstances and to use this blurring to their advantage."

How, then, are we to grapple with these shifting societal dynamics? How can we make sure that museums are players in the field without compromising what makes them special? Perhaps we should consider the advice of the AAM National Advisory Committee on Education, chaired by Minneapolis Institute of Arts Director Evan Maurer, which concluded its work this past fall. Convened to determine how AAM could encourage museums to place education at the center of their public service role, the advisory committee recommended articulating and describing "the real meaning of what museums do—the core values that make them essential institutions." This is an important task for AAM—and also for museums. If museums are to compete successfully, we must convince others that we have a value unlike that offered by any other type of institution.

The key to successful competition may lie—ironically, perhaps—in the last word of the 1997 annual meeting theme: "Cooperation." The Strategic Plan says that "partnership and collaboration are increasingly important" and that "museums will need to develop greater facility in forging innovative and mutually advantageous partnerships and collaborative arrangements with other not-for-profit institutions, with business enterprises, and with government at every level." By working closely with one another and with other types of organizations, museums can do what they do best: collect, preserve, educate, and—yes—even entertain. ■

# Coda



Frank A. Rinehart (possibly Adolf F. Muhr), *In Winter, Kiowa* (1898). From "American Photographs: The First Century from the Isaacs Collection in the National Museum of American Art." On display through April 20, 1997.

Balancing "picture" and "photograph" is a tense exercise. During its first century, the many-intentioned enterprise of American photography shaped not only a new art but a new archive of visual reference. By and large, photography is a method of exploration and verification: exploration of those characteristics of the medium that had been so unexpectedly granted—mobility, instantaneousness, optical veracity—and verification of purpose, including the sometimes divergent contexts of making and viewing. At once picture and message, the photographic enterprise successfully collapses the voice between the provinces of art and description. American photographers, using a variety of photographic methods for diverse purposes, sought to shape the world into meaningful images that conformed to cultural ideas of reality. Considered today, "the exhaustless store" of photography reflects the wider medium of vision.

—Merry A. Foresta

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